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4 SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE
5 JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL,
6 U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
7 WASHINGTON, D.C.

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11 DEPOSITION OF: ANIKA COLLIER NAVAROLI

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15 Thursday, September 1, 2022

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17 Washington, D.C.

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20 The deposition in the above matter was held in Room 5480, O'Neill House Office
21 Building, commencing at 1:20 p.m.

22 Present: Representative Murphy.

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2 Appearances:

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5 For the SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE

6 THE JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL:

7

8 [REDACTED], PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER

9 [REDACTED] INVESTIGATOR

10 [REDACTED] STAFF ASSOCIATE

11 [REDACTED] INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

12 [REDACTED], CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

13 [REDACTED] INVESTIGATIVE ANALYST

14 [REDACTED] CHIEF CLERK

15 [REDACTED], SENIOR COUNSEL & SENIOR ADVISOR

16

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18 For the WITNESS:

19

20 ALEXIS RONICKHER

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2 ██████████ Good afternoon. This is a deposition continuance for Anika Collier
3 Navaroli, conducted by the House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack
4 on the U.S. Capitol pursuant to House Resolution 503.

5 Like last time, this will be a staff-led deposition, although members may of course
6 choose to ask questions.

7 And I'd like to remind the witness that you're still under oath.

8 ██████████. In our prior session, we referred to the witness as "J. Smith" in order
9 to protect their identity. We understand at this time the witness wishes to identify
10 themselves for the record. Is that correct?

11 The Witness. Yes, that is correct.

12 ██████████ So, in that case, can you please state your full name and spell it for the
13 record?

14 The Witness. Yes. My name is Anika Collier Navaroli. That is A-n-i-k-a,
15 C-o-l-l-i-e-r, Navaroli, N-a-v, as in "Victor," -a-r-o-l-i.

16 Mr. ██████████ Great. Thank you.

17 And, as you know, my name is ██████████ I'm an investigative counsel with the
18 select committee.

19 With me today from the select committee staff are ██████████, chief investigative
20 counsel; ██████████ senior counsel and senior advisor; ██████████, investigator;
21 ██████████, investigator; ██████████, investigative staff member; and ██████████
22 ██████████, professional staff member.

23 ██████████ I think we also have the chief clerk, ██████████, on as well.

24 ██████████ Indeed. Thank you, ██████████

25 And I'll note for the record that there are no members currently in the room.

1 And, again, they might be able to join later on.

2 As I said last time, if you don't understand a question at any point, please just let
3 me know, and we can restate the question.

4 We're going to be going over some of the material that we covered in our last
5 deposition, and we'll also be asking some additional questions.

6 Before we begin, I just wanted to confirm that you were subpoenaed by the select
7 committee for this testimony?

8 The Witness. Yes, I was.

9 [REDACTED] Do you understand that you're still appearing here today pursuant to
10 the same subpoena as when you appeared last time?

11 The Witness. Yes, I do.

12 [REDACTED] And can you confirm that you previously sat for the first part of this
13 deposition with the select committee on May 9, 2022?

14 The Witness. Yes, I did.

15 [REDACTED] Because this is a deposition, you may refuse to answer a question only
16 to preserve a privilege that's recognized by the select committee. We don't expect this
17 to be a problem, of course, but if you do refuse to answer a question based on a privilege,
18 we may either proceed with the deposition or ask the chairman for a ruling on the
19 objection. If the chairman overrules the objection, you are required to answer the
20 question.

21 But thank you again for your cooperation and for agreeing to speak with us again
22 today.

23 There is an official reporter transcribing the record of this interview. So please
24 wait until each question is completed before you begin your response, and we'll try to
25 wait until your response is complete before we ask our next question. The stenographer

1 cannot record nonverbal responses, like shaking your head or a thumbs-up, so it is
2 important that you answer each question with an audible, verbal response.

3 And, as you know, we ask that you provide complete answers based on your best
4 recollection. So anything that you can't clearly remember, just say so.

5 And if at any point you want to discuss something with your attorney, please just
6 let us know, and we can take a break.

7 Since you are still under oath, I just want to remind you that you're obligated
8 under Federal law to tell the truth the same as if you were speaking with the DOJ or the
9 FBI. And just reminding you that out of an abundance of caution.

10 Do you understand?

11 The Witness. Yes, sir. Thank you.

12 [REDACTED] You are not obligated to keep the fact of this interview -- of this
13 deposition, rather, and what we discuss confidential. You are free to tell whomever you
14 wish that you met with us again. But we will not share the substance of this deposition
15 until the committee authorizes release.

16 The Witness. Okay. Sounds good.

17 [REDACTED] And, at this point, I want to confirm that the witness and counsel are
18 okay with [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] asking questions, since they're not
19 lawyers.

20 Ms. Ronickher. Yes.

21 [REDACTED] Great. Thank you.

22 And, without objection, let's begin.

23 EXAMINATION

24 BY [REDACTED]

25 Q I want to proceed largely in the same order as we did with our initial session

1 to drill down on some of the key points that we discussed last time. But, first, I wanted
2 to get some more background information now that you are here and identifying
3 yourself.

4 So, for the record, what was your role while you were at Twitter?

5 A Yeah. So, while I was at Twitter, I was a senior safety policy domain
6 specialist. By the time of January 6th, I was -- at that time, I was the most senior and
7 tenured member of the United States safety policy team.

8 And so that team is responsible for a couple of things within the Twitter platform
9 and within the content moderation system.

10 First, the team is responsible for writing the external policy, so what's called the
11 Twitter rules that you see externally. The team is also responsible for writing internally
12 the guidelines for how those rules should apply. That often takes the form of what's
13 called enforcement guidance, which I think we talked a little bit about last time.

14 The team is also responsible for making recommendations on very
15 high-profile-level content. So anything that would be coming from a world leader or
16 coming from a high-level politician, those would also come to our desk.

17 Finally, any decision that could not be reached or any recommendation that could
18 not be made on a piece of content by any other content moderator around the world, if it
19 was still in a gray space, it would come to my team and it would sit on my team's desk to
20 be able to evaluate and make a policy assessment and make a recommendation.

21 Those were typically the main roles of that team.

22 And within the Twitter rules, we covered and thought very specifically about
23 policies that related to abuse, that are related to harassment, violence, privacy,
24 nonconsensual nudity, as well as other privacy and sensitive media violations.

25 Q Thank you. So what were the dates that you worked in this role?

1 A Yeah. So I started in 2019, and I worked through the beginning of 2021.

2 Q Great. Thank you.

3 So you were there through the beginning of 2021. Can you give a brief overview
4 of what your role was in Twitter's preparation for and response to the attack on the
5 Capitol on January 6th?

6 A Yes. So my team, as I mentioned, was responsible for policies that had to
7 do with violence. And so, leading up until January 6th, I was part of the team and was
8 part of the smaller group of individuals that was working specifically on policies related to
9 incitement and, in addition to that, working on a very specific policy around coded
10 incitement to violence that was in anticipation of events that we saw that occurred on
11 January 6th.

12 Q And we'll get into this more later on, but can you give us a brief description
13 of what "coded incitement" means?

14 A Yeah. Yeah. So coded incitement to violence was a unique policy and
15 area that fell underneath a larger purview of incitement. And incitement, at the time, at
16 Twitter, was very much in flux, and we were working to fill a couple of gaps within that
17 policy, specifically incitement to violence. At the time, Twitter did not have an
18 incitement to violence policy on the books.

19 And in addition to the incitement to violence policy, leading up into the election in
20 2020, after discussions internally, we recognized we had an even more substantial gap
21 with what we were calling "coded incitement to violence." So coded incitement to
22 violence would be not-explicit calls for violence, so not phrases like "I am going to," "I am
23 about to," "I wish," "I hope," "I desire." All of those would've been very explicit calls to
24 violence.

25 The coded incitement to violence policy was more nuanced and directed towards

1 what would be considered dog whistles or considered language that at its face value
2 might not necessarily be incitement language but, taken within the context of either
3 history or within the sociopolitical environment in which the phrase is landing, very much
4 could then stoke the flames of violence.

5 Q And was there a particular account or event on Twitter that spurred the
6 need for this dog whistle policy?

7 A Yeah. Not on -- it didn't happen on Twitter, but one of the Presidential
8 debates. There was a moment in time in which I believe the former President, Donald
9 Trump, was asked to renounce White supremacists, and he responded by telling the
10 Proud Boys to stand back and stand by.

11 And after that debate happened, we had a very typical conversation within
12 Twitter, because at that point one of our main concerns was always tracking what the
13 former President was saying because, inevitably, whatever he said off-platform, our
14 concern was, what happens when he says it here?

15 And, knowing that there was a direct correlation between what he was saying at
16 events or debates and what would be coming to the platform, we recognized that that
17 language, the "stand back, stand by" language, was, again, this sort of coded, dog whistle
18 language directed towards extremist groups that we could not allow to happen on
19 Twitter.

20 Q Thank you. We'll get back to that soon, but I wanted to ask a few more
21 questions about your background on Twitter.

22 Before you got to Twitter, can you let us know a little bit more about your
23 educational background, why you were working in this content moderation space?

24 A Yeah, absolutely. So my background and my expertise very much lie at the
25 intersection of media, policy, technology, free speech, First Amendment, and race.

1 My journey in this began academically. I started at the University of Florida
2 many years ago studying media law. Very specifically, I fell in love with trying to
3 understand how civil rights and civil liberties were going to be able to expand into a
4 journalism industry that was being increasingly technologically advanced.

5 I worked at a newspaper the summer that it went digital, and it blew my mind.
6 And I thought to myself, how are these policies that are going to be -- that have always
7 been based on the printing press work in design or work in MacBooks? This was the
8 time before social media.

9 And so I became determined to really set out an educational path and career
10 within this very niche field of media law and policy. At the time, there were only three
11 universities and institutions within the United States that actually offered media law
12 programs. One was at the University of Florida. Another was at the University of
13 North Carolina, so I went there for law school.

14 I actually worked and was the research assistant at the Center for Media Law and
15 Policy once I joined there. And I focused all of my classes specifically around speech,
16 specifically around the First Amendment, specifically around what was back then called
17 "cyber law," and all of these kind of new emerging technologies.

18 At the time, Twitter was maybe 1 or 2 years old. And I was a very early adopter
19 of the technology. I remember going back to undergrad, and one of the very first things
20 I did when I got my dot-edu account was register for Facebook. So I've always been an
21 early adopter of this sort of social media technology.

22 And, going into law school and studying speech, I recognized that there was this
23 even more interesting transition that was happening on social media, specifically as it
24 related to free expression, specifically as it related to protesting and civil rights
25 movements and movements for political speech.

1 And so I went to the law school that had a media law program, Columbia. And,
2 there, I actually wrote my master's thesis specifically on Twitter. It was entitled "The
3 Revolution Will Be Tweeted." And the revolution has been tweeted a couple of times
4 over since then.

5 And, at that time, I was looking at Occupy Wall Street and thinking very specifically
6 about this case of first impression in which Twitter was asked to relinquish information
7 about a private user in order to use it within this legal case and proceeding. And I
8 started asking these questions of, you know, who owned speech on Twitter and who was
9 going to be making these determinations about where this information should go or how
10 it should be processed -- should it be kept up, should it be left out -- very much
11 anticipating the job that I would end up having almost a decade later.

12 So I graduated from school. I went and worked at two law firms. And then I
13 went and continued working very specifically in this field working within a think tank and
14 leading up their work thinking about Big Data and fairness, especially at the time, and a
15 lot of new policing technologies.

16 I also went and worked at an online civil rights organization and led up their work
17 thinking a lot about internet freedom and Big Data. One of my jobs there was actually
18 going and talking with Twitter, which is how I got to know the team a lot -- talking with
19 Twitter specifically about a lot of their hateful-conduct policies and the gaps that were
20 necessary and needed in order to fill them, and recognizing at that time, while I knew
21 there needed to be changes, I didn't exactly know how to do it, because I didn't know
22 how the machine worked.

23 And so I took a stint teaching high school for a little while. And then I actually
24 went and joined the team at Twitter, after reaching out to them and speaking to them
25 again about, you know, this need for these policies to be able to be expanded and

1 advanced in order to provide the protection that was necessary for Twitter users.

2 Q So it seems like you came to work at Twitter to try to expand some of their
3 policies preventing violence and bias on the platform?

4 A Absolutely. Yes.

5 Q And when did you leave Twitter?

6 A Yeah. So I left Twitter March of 2021.

7 Q And why did you leave Twitter?

8 A I believed that I could no longer be complicit in what I saw to be a company
9 and a product that was wantonly allowing violence to occur. And I believed, after having
10 the knowledge that I had, going through the experiences that I had, and having
11 conversations with the vice president and recognizing that there was not going to be any
12 change, the platform was going to continue to allow people to die, and I could not be a
13 part of that.

14 Q And that's largely based on your experience working with the Twitter team
15 through January 6th?

16 A Yes.

17 Q And, just to clarify, you meant vice president of Twitter, Del Harvey, correct?

18 A Yes.

19 Q Other vice presidents are often mentioned, so --

20 A Yes, yes. In this specific instance, it was a conversation that I had in March
21 with Del Harvey specifically around coded incitement and whether or not to continue to
22 have that policy in place, and her deciding not to have that policy in place, in which I
23 realized that the problem that I had saw occurring was going to continue to occur, and I
24 could no longer be a part of it.

25 Q Well, thank you for all that.

1 The last question I have on this sort of background is sort of your interaction with
2 senior leadership at Twitter while you were in your position on the safety policy team.

3 You mentioned Del Harvey. What was the nature of your interactions with her?
4 Were there other senior leadership members that you interacted with, and how?

5 A Yeah. Yeah. So Del Harvey was, again, the former vice president of trust
6 and safety at Twitter during the time in which I worked there. My interactions with her
7 often came because of my positionality within the team. As I mentioned, I was the most
8 senior and tenured member of the United States safety policy team. I was also the
9 subject-matter expert for free expression.

10 And so, whenever there came an instance during the United States time zone in
11 which the team's opinions or assessments or recommendations needed to be
12 represented to leadership, I was the individual that was responsible for having those
13 conversations with Del, for making those arguments towards Del.

14 Del was primarily the main contact within leadership that I had, especially at that
15 point, around the time of January 6th.

16 Del reported to Vijaya Gadde, who is the chief legal officer, I want to say, of
17 Twitter. I was on emails with Vijaya often, in exchanges especially when it came to
18 sending recommendations that needed Vijaya's approval or signoff. I did not have
19 regular conversations with her.

20 And Vijaya reported to Jack Dorsey. I believe that I might have been in one or
21 two meetings with Jack my entire tenure there, but I would not say that I had a
22 relationship and/or conversed in conversation with him. So Del was my main point of
23 contact within Twitter leadership.

24 Q Thank you.

25 So, at this point, I want to hand it over to [REDACTED] to ask a couple of questions

1 on Twitter's general election preparation, and then we'll dive in.

2 A Perfect. Thank you.

3 [REDACTED] Thank you, [REDACTED]

4 And thank you, Ms. Navaroli, for coming in and speaking with us today. I
5 understand you do so at great expense to your personal time and with no small degree of
6 consideration.

7 BY [REDACTED]

8 Q I want to back up to Twitter's general election posture, just to make sure
9 that we have as full an understanding as possible about what the attitudes and
10 preparations within the company looked like throughout 2020 and even going back to the
11 fall of 2019.

12 Our understanding is that Twitter had formed a threat model to assess its
13 readiness for the 2020 election and whatever challenges it might bring.

14 To the extent you're able to answer this, because I know it may not have
15 necessarily been your primary responsibility, but could you characterize your team's
16 involvement in that process?

17 A Yes, I can. I'm taking a couple of notes. Characterize my team's -- what
18 was the word you used?

19 Q Involvement.

20 A Thank you. Involvement. Yes.

21 So I will say I was not the point of contact for my team on what I believe was
22 called, like, the elections team or -- I don't know what the official name of it was. I was
23 not the main point of contact from the safety policy team on that. There was another
24 member of the safety policy team that served as point of contact.

25 And, from my understanding, there was what was called a cross-functional -- so

1 across departments the entire company-wide -- team that was put together in
2 anticipation of the 2020 election.

3 My team's involvement I can characterize as partial. I will say, the individuals
4 from my team that were responsible for being the main points of contact were not the
5 most senior and/or tenured members of the team. The initial team member was a
6 junior member of the team, and then the second team member was someone who had
7 just recently joined the team. And so it was a bit of a frustration point, that we might
8 not necessarily have as strong of a showing on the safety policy team as was necessary.

9 And at that point, I think we've mentioned, the entire team was chaotic, and it
10 was one of those situations and scenarios in which, you know, we were doing our very
11 best.

12 And so I remember specifically this individual, the election point of contact, being
13 asked -- I believe they started in, like, summer of 2020, so not -- I'm sorry, summer of
14 2019, so not too far out from the election, to create what was called, like, an election
15 strategy, right? So to start from scratch and say, going into this election that we know is
16 going to be absolutely historic, you as a person who has never done this before, can you
17 please create a strategy for this entire team on how we should be thinking about this
18 election and handling it?

19 This person was what we called my buddy, so I was responsible for their
20 on-boarding. And so I worked with them hand-in-hand, specifically around saying, like, I
21 know you've never done anything like this before, so let me try and help and come in and
22 figure what the shape of the document should look like, what the format of the
23 document should look like.

24 And a part of that was, again, figuring out, you know, which one of our policies we
25 thought that we should be thinking the most about in advance, how we should be

1 thinking about those policies, how we should be applying those, thinking through risk
2 scenarios that we might anticipate or see coming into the election and what we would do
3 in response to those.

4 So I would characterize, again, my team's involvement as: We were involved.
5 We were not what is called the "driver." So, in tech, there's a rubric of what's called
6 sometimes a RACI or a DACIN, depending on where you are. It's a program
7 management tool. At Twitter, it's a DACIN, and the "D" stands for "driver." And the
8 person or team that was responsible for the creation of and the complete moving
9 forward of that thing, our team was not a driver.

10 We were probably what was -- on the DACIN, again, would be a team that was
11 accountable, consulted, informed, or notified. I believe we might have been a team that
12 was accountable or informed. But we were not, again, the drivers of the exact sort of
13 general election readiness.

14 Q Thanks. That's very helpful.

15 And so, just to recap a little bit, the people on your team who were engaged in
16 this process were recent hires, pretty junior. Was this something that came up in team
17 meetings? Is it something that your manager at the time or your manager later -- I
18 believe during that period your manager would've changed -- is this something they were
19 involved in? How engaged -- how big of a priority for your team would you describe this
20 process?

21 A Yeah. So, as you mentioned, we did have some managerial turnover at that
22 time. And so there was a global head who I believe before being terminated would've
23 been involved within some of these election conversations.

24 I should say -- so civic integrity, which covers elections, the civic integrity team
25 was a different team than my team. It sat underneath what was called the site policy

1 team. My team was the safety policy team that sat underneath -- I'm sorry. The civic
2 integrity team sat underneath the site integrity team, and we sat underneath the site
3 policy team. Again, very confusing words and terms and phrases. But all that to say,
4 the civic integrity team was a different team. That team was the driver.

5 And so my manager at the time, who was the global head, would've most likely
6 been involved in these meetings. I believe that they had stand-up meetings, so, you
7 know, regular meetings; they had a Slack channel. She would've been involved in those
8 things.

9 And then, after her termination, when my new manager took over, I am actually
10 not sure of what her involvement within the process would be. I think, you know, we
11 talked about last time that she very often didn't show up to meetings or, when she
12 attended, was not necessarily paying attention. So I cannot speak to exactly her
13 involvement, but I would anticipate, if I were to assume, it would be very similar to that
14 within those meetings.

15 Q Were you ever briefed on the threat model or its implications for your team?

16 A No, I was not. I believe the most information that I would've received is,
17 when we had regularly scheduled team meetings, the individual responsible, the election
18 point of contact, most likely would've updated our team on ongoings or things that
19 happened within the team. But I do not remember ever seeing any threat model or
20 threat analysis leading up to the election.

21 Q Did they ever mention recommended improvements to your team's
22 processes or, in particular, any recommendations related to coded incitement or implicit
23 incitement?

24 A Not to my knowledge, no.

25 Q Okay.

1 I think no further questions on this, [REDACTED] if you want to continue.

2 BY [REDACTED]

3 Q So I guess, on that point, seeing how the election preparation was handled,
4 with a very junior staffer who you were, seems like, kind of mentoring, were you
5 concerned at that point, mid-2019 going into the end of the year, that Twitter was not
6 adequately prepared for what was coming?

7 A Absolutely. Absolutely. I was concerned and shocked by the decisions
8 that management was making in leading up to what we, again, knew was going to be an
9 absolutely historic election.

10 And, at that time, I had to make the decision of whether or not I wanted to involve
11 myself and go above and beyond and try and get involved in that sort of process, and
12 recognized I was at my limit and could not take on another project.

13 And, again, the best that I could do was work with the point of contact and try and
14 help shape the work product that they were doing and have regular check-ins with that
15 individual to be able to converse about what was happening within those meetings to
16 help at least provide my expertise to the situation. But I was not in the position of
17 having the capacity to be able to jump in the way that I honestly would've liked to.

18 Q So your team, the safety policy team, focuses a lot on content that involves
19 violent extremist content, violent far-right groups. Is that correct?

20 A Yes, and -- so the safety policy team has a sister team -- I know I keep
21 mentioning very specific teams, but there is a second team called the cyber crime policy
22 team. So I mentioned the site policy, which is the larger umbrella. Under site policy,
23 we have safety policy and cyber crime policy. Cyber crime policy was specifically focused
24 on terrorist organizations, violent extremist groups, and child sexual exploitation.

25 There were people on both the cyber crime policy and the safety policy team,

1 which was the site policy team. So, while I was not specifically focused on the things
2 that you mentioned -- violent extremist groups or terrorist organizations -- the sister
3 team that I sat on was.

4 Q Do you believe that the election preparation in its early stages adequately
5 represented teams that dealt with things like far-right extremist groups or other kinds of
6 violent content?

7 A I'm not sure, to be honest with you. Again, I don't know what I would've
8 assumed, if somebody from the cyber crime policy team would've also been a part of that
9 election group. And that person would've been responsible for bringing their expertise
10 specifically in relation to, again, the terrorist-organizations/violent-extremist-group
11 aspect towards the election.

12 My recollection and my memory, I do not know who that individual was or if that
13 individual existed. But I would hope that that was what would've happened.

14 Q That's really helpful.

15 So, at this point, I want to move towards the coded incitement to violence policy
16 that we've already discussed. So, if you want to look at this binder, first tab, exhibit 1,
17 this is the draft policy that was provided to us.

18 Do you recognize the document?

19 A I do recognize this document, yes. This is a Google document that was
20 created by a member of the safety policy team, myself, and a couple of other individuals
21 specifically outlining what we called our coded incitement to violence policy and giving
22 what we called enforcement guidance on how to apply it within specific situations.

23 This is a very -- as I mentioned at the very beginning of us talking, we often wrote
24 what was called enforcement guidance as part of our regular job. This is an example of
25 something that was very much within our purview that we would very often write of

1 either a new policy here or an addition to policy through a Google document.

2 Q So this is obviously quite a lengthy document. Could you give us a brief
3 description of what the coded incitement policy was?

4 A Yes. Again, so the coded incitement to violence policy was an attempt by
5 members of the safety policy team to fill a gap within Twitter's policies as they existed
6 specifically towards incitement.

7 This, again, was more directed towards nuanced language and not explicit
8 incitement to violence and, rather, dog whistle language, coded language, language that
9 was beneath the radar, that was not as in your face but just as harmful.

10 Q So would the goal of this policy be to remove tweets that were the dog
11 whistle or remove violent tweets that were responding to the dog whistle or somewhere
12 in between?

13 A The hope is that it would've applied to all of the above. What we saw,
14 again, in anticipation was, what if the dog whistle came from the former President
15 himself, which was something we were anticipating and thinking about.

16 And, also, this was in response to a lot of the rhetoric that we were already seeing
17 on the platform that was on this sort of beyond gray and into a sort of border that we had
18 not yet crossed yet that we believed should be a violation.

19 Q So was the focus on stopping the spread of content that could result in
20 real-world harm?

21 A Yes.

22 Q And you mentioned earlier that this policy was conceived after President
23 Trump told the Proud Boys to stand back and stand by in the first Presidential debate. Is
24 that correct?

25 A Yes. Yes.

1 Q Can you describe for us why Twitter felt that President Trump's comments to
2 the Proud Boys deserved this lengthy policy response?

3 Ms. Ronickher. I'm going to step in. I don't know that she's in a capacity to say
4 why Twitter --

5 [REDACTED] Sure.

6 Ms. Ronickher. So maybe just answer what you know.

7 The Witness. Yes.

8 Will you repeat the question for me?

9 [REDACTED] Sure.

10 The Witness. Thank you.

11 BY [REDACTED]:

12 Q So, from your vantage point within Twitter, why was President Trump's
13 comment during the first debate to the Proud Boys a comment that was worthy of this
14 response?

15 A It was different; it was unique. Again, at this time, I had spent almost
16 2 years reviewing almost every tweet that came from Donald Trump, so I was very
17 familiar with his language and very familiar with the way that he was able to
18 remain -- again, as I mentioned the gray area -- remain in the gray area or circumvent and
19 circumspect rules.

20 And so -- I'm going to pause here and say something that I read which helps kind
21 of inform this. I remember reading an article in which Donald Trump talked about his
22 Twitter usage, and he said something to the effect of, "I send them out like little missiles
23 when I hit 'send.'" And, for me, I remember reading that and thinking, this sounds like
24 weaponization of a platform. And not only is it weaponization of a platform, it is bold,
25 he's owning up to it, and this seems to be exactly what's happening.

1 And so, with the sort of recognition of this individual sees and knows their
2 language to be, in their own words, missiles, so weapons, I became concerned that
3 Twitter was the launching pad for missiles and where they would land and how they
4 would land.

5 And so, when we heard the language of that election -- of the debate, the "stand
6 back, stand by," it was incredibly different. It was no longer Donald Trump courting
7 White supremacist organizations or having their allegiance or trying to tie some sort of
8 nexus towards this populism that was happening. It was a very -- it was a direct address
9 and it was a direct command coming from the Commander in Chief to a known militant
10 organization.

11 And so that specific directive and command was not something that had ever
12 happened before. You know, again, there was a sort of courting, there was a sort of,
13 you know, a nexus of groups, but they hadn't converged. And at that moment, there
14 was a convergence.

15 Q Thank you.

16 I want to note for the record that Representative Stephanie Murphy has joined
17 online.

18 But getting back to what you were just talking about, it occurs to me that you said
19 earlier that inevitably what Donald Trump was saying off Twitter eventually came onto
20 Twitter.

21 So, when you were talking about trying to prevent Twitter from being a launching
22 pad for missiles, how did you view the trajectory of those missiles after the "stand back
23 and stand by" comment? Did you worry they were going to come back to Twitter very
24 soon?

25 A Yes. Yes. Again, it seemed like there was a stopwatch on -- Donald Trump

1 had crossed a line when he said those comments. That was very, very clear, especially
2 as someone who studies speech and understands speech. And that line could not be
3 crossed on Twitter, because once it was crossed on Twitter, Twitter became responsible
4 for that thing.

5 And so, in my position, in my job, I was responsible for balancing free expression
6 and safety. And, in my view, that sort of language created such a safety risk, and an
7 imminent safety risk, that it was, at the time, necessary to begin limiting free expression.

8 Q So the coded incitement policy was essentially meant to prevent Donald
9 Trump or someone in a similar situation from tweeting "stand back and stand by" to a
10 White supremacist group on the platform.

11 A Absolutely, yes.

12 Q And so can you walk me through what happened in actually formulating this
13 policy? The debate happens, it's that night, you hear the comment. What then?
14 What was your role in standing this up?

15 A Yeah. So we had a couple of conversations within Twitter specifically
16 speaking with individuals who had knowledge and expertise of human rights and of the
17 legal liabilities that come from content moderation. And, leaving that conversation, my
18 team and I were very much under the impression that there was an urgency and a
19 necessity to create this policy that would fill this gap and prohibit the type of content like
20 the "stand back and stand by" from being able to be posted on Twitter and proliferate on
21 Twitter.

22 Q So you mentioned that this was a line the President crossed. But,
23 obviously, there had been other instances where the President had tweeted
24 inflammatory remarks. We talked in our last session about his tweet over the summer
25 about the looting starting and the shooting starting.

1 A Uh-huh.

2 Q Was there anything you were seeing, your team was seeing, in monitoring
3 the platform, about the responses to the "stand back and stand by" comment that were
4 particularly alarming?

5 A I don't know that I can point to a tweet or to specifically, but I can speak to
6 the general tenor of the conversation. So, at Twitter, we refer to everything that's
7 happening on the platform as "the conversation." And monitoring it as a whole, there
8 was a significant shift.

9 And I remember watching that shift happen throughout all of 2020. And it began
10 with, you know, COVID and mask mandates and stay-at-home orders and a very
11 increasing -- what we would call at Twitter a tense sociopolitical situation happening on
12 the ground.

13 And we saw individuals begin to speak about overthrowing the government. But
14 that was not the main piece of the conversation; that was kind of the outlier of the
15 conversation.

16 As the year and summer progressed and we went into protests for human rights
17 for Black individuals, we did see Donald Trump go farther. And so the tweet that
18 included the phrase, "When the looting starts, the shooting starts," was the very first time
19 that Twitter had actually used what was called the public interest interstitial on Donald
20 Trump. So it was the very first time that the company had decided that what he said
21 actually violated their policies.

22 And part of the reason why that was determined was because there was very
23 specific historical context around that phrase. So not only was it a dog whistle and not
24 only was it coded language, but it had been used before in history and had actually led to
25 violence in Miami against Black Americans. And because of that and the reality that

1 there was precedent for that language leading to incitement, my team was able to make
2 the argument and show exact proof that this language leads to violence. And that is
3 why we were able to use the public interest interstitial.

4 But, again, we had to draw that very specific connection, and it couldn't have been
5 inference that maybe it would've happened. Instead, it had to say: This has already
6 happened in the past, and we know this to be true.

7 So, from seeing that language evolve from, again, use of historic dog whistles to
8 then this new sort of coded language that was becoming the conversation and the
9 exchange that was happening within the GOP party at the time and leading up to the
10 shooting at Kenosha, we then saw calls for, you know, armed marches on capitals. And
11 throughout each one of those steps, individuals on Twitter were becoming more militant,
12 right, were expressing more of this desire for violent overthrow of the government, were
13 referencing more to violent civil wars or the need for a second civil war.

14 And so, when we came to the "stand back, stand by" comment, I think that the
15 floodgates kind of opened at that moment, right? And it was a very specific shift in
16 tenor from a, "Well, maybe we should do civil war," to, "We're definitely going to do civil
17 war, and we're looking for a time, place, and manner, and the government needs be
18 overthrown in some sort of violent manner."

19 And that was the language that we began to see in November that we talked
20 about last time very specifically and I argued should be taken down because of what I
21 believed the harm to be.

22 Q So we'll get to that. And, actually, building into that timeline, that "stand
23 back, stand by" moment you worried would usher in a new stage of more open calls for
24 conflict, perhaps President Trump himself using the platform to further those calls, and
25 that's why you formulated with your team this coded incitement policy?

1 A Yes. Absolutely.

2 Q So you spoke about taking the earlier tweet over the summer to leadership
3 and arguing that there was direct evidence to say, we should have a warning on this
4 tweet, essentially, and that was successful.

5 Can you talk more about the reception that your proposal received this time when
6 you said, here's a comment we believed crossed the line and here's the policy response it
7 deserves?

8 A Yeah. Yeah. So the response was different, and I think part of that is
9 because it wasn't said on Twitter. Again, so this was an anticipatory recommendation.
10 And I will say, you know, that was part of our regular jobs. We monitored what was
11 happening day-in and day-out all around the world for any potential anything, especially
12 clashes, political violence, protest to happen and to spur and to come up. And so this
13 was just another one of those moments. And it was, I think, unique given that it was
14 happening within the United States and given that it was happening with President
15 Donald Trump.

16 Q So seeing around corners to foreign policy that would prevent potential
17 unrest before an election was a typical part of your job?

18 A That was the job, right? I think, as a good policy person, part of the job is
19 being able to anticipate the risk. And I think good policy people -- I often liken our
20 brains to algorithms, because algorithms are built off of brains. But very much the job
21 is -- it's data collection, right? It's looking at the platform, it's seeing what's being said,
22 it's understanding what the rules currently are, it's knowing which levers are able to be
23 pulled at any given circumstance or situation, taking all of that information, processing it
24 and saying, without any intervention, this is going to -- predicting, like, this is the
25 inevitable outcome, right?

1 And so our jobs were to be able to do that, but to also say, this is what we should
2 do in order to make sure that this prediction that we are coming up with doesn't happen.

3 Q So what was the response that you got from senior leadership when you
4 brought them the coded incitement policy?

5 A Yeah. So we brought it to Del Harvey I believe in November. Del did not
6 seem interested, enthused. I wouldn't characterize her as necessarily seeing the
7 urgency that the rest of us felt or saw in the requirement for this policy. Yeah.

8 Q And this was before the election?

9 A Yes. This was leading -- this was November of 2020, leading into the
10 election. Yes.

11 Q So, at that point, you had taken some time after the debate, "stand back and
12 stand by," and you had seen more of this civil conflict content on the platform and used
13 that to formulate the policy, I assume?

14 A Yes.

15 Q Was there anything in particular on the platform that you saw in the
16 intervening weeks between "stand back and stand by" and when you spoke with Del
17 Harvey about the policy that was particularly concerning?

18 A I don't know of anything that was specifically concerning, but, again, it was
19 the rise in rhetoric specifically around references to violent wars, violent American
20 wars -- so a lot of conversations about civil war, the need to have a civil war, a lot of
21 references to 1776, the American Revolution, a lot of very specific references to violence
22 in a way that we had not seen before.

23 Q So that's the kind of content that we'll talk about before January 6th. But
24 what you're saying here is that that was happening before the election even occurred.

25 A Yes. Yes. Very much so.

1 Q But you said that Del Harvey was not receptive to making this policy final?

2 A Yeah, she was not receptive to making the policy final. It also seemed that
3 she didn't seem to understand, again, the need for such a policy and why we had had this
4 sort of urgency.

5 I don't know if we've talked about this, but in that sort of timeframe of
6 October/November, we had also met with a constitutional law expert -- am I allowed to
7 talk about this?

8 Ms. Ronickher. Before you do, we should talk offline just to make sure.

9 Can we talk a moment to --

10 [REDACTED] Sure. We can go off the record briefly at 2:12.

11 [Discussion off the record.]

12 [REDACTED] Back on the record at 2:13 p.m.

13 The Witness. Do you mind repeating the question for me?

14 BY [REDACTED]:

15 Q Sure. So I was asking about the response that you got from your
16 supervisors and senior Twitter leadership when you brought the coded incitement policy
17 to them around the time of the election, shortly before the election.

18 A Yes. Their responses were lacking. They did not seem to understand the
19 urgency or the need or to have the background on a lot of the conversations that we had
20 had internally that expressly made clear that there was this gigantic gap in our policies
21 that needed to be addressed.

22 Q And, in our prior session, you referenced a conversation with Del Harvey
23 about how rhetoric on the platform should be interpreted, whether or not it was
24 seriously hinting at violence or should be interpreted in a different way. Can you walk
25 us through that conversation again?

1 A I believe so. So could you tell me a little bit more about that conversation
2 before I --

3 Q So there was a conversation where you were discussing the coded
4 incitement policy, and there was a reference to, I believe, folks saying "locked and
5 loaded" on the platform, and I believe Del Harvey said that that could be a reference to
6 self-defense.

7 A Yes.

8 Q And you thought, in the context of the election and what was going on, that
9 was not a credible --

10 A Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

11 So, in this conversation, I believe this is the conversation where we went to Del
12 with not only just the guidance but also specific tweets that we had seen and that we had
13 assessed as violation or no violation. We were arguing -- I was arguing for the need to
14 remove the tweets that we found to be in violation.

15 A lot of what -- we saw a lot of common phrases being used. So, in addition to
16 "stand back and stand by," one of the most common phrases that was being used was
17 "locked and loaded." The other ones, again, were "civil war part two," "1776,"
18 "revolution." There were a lot of QAnon terms that were being used as well.

19 In my conversation with Del Harvey, the reasoning that she gave to me for not
20 wanting to take the content down was essentially a counter-speech example. And the
21 example that she gave was, what if someone is saying that they are locked and loaded
22 and they are in their house, ready to defend themselves? So essentially a self-defense,
23 you know, sort of response.

24 I found that example to be nonsensical, one, because after looking at literally
25 hundreds of tweets, I had not seen anything that looked like that.

1 The other reason I will say is because, as an expert in free speech, one of the
2 things that I consistently was a proponent for in every single one of the policies that we
3 created was what we called carve-outs for counter-speech. And so very much what I
4 would have -- if this was a situation in which we would've had calls for violence -- and this
5 had happened before -- in which there would've been calls for violence or a glorification
6 of violence or a discussion of violence and there was someone talking about it in a
7 self-defense way, we very much could have written a carve-out within a policy and
8 allowed that to stay on the platform.

9 My argument was not to remove content in which people were calling for
10 self-defense. I believe people should be allowed to use Twitter to call for self-defense.
11 The content that I was specifically speaking about was, again, this -- it was incitement to
12 violence.

13 The other example that Del gave me, which led me to honestly believe that she
14 was not serious at all about the problem, was her saying, well, what if someone is saying
15 that they are locked and loaded and ready to shotgun a beer? I've been to a lot of
16 sporting schools. I went to tailgate parties. I understand shotgunning a beer. I
17 believe in people's rights to shotgun their beers. And I had never seen anything like that
18 on the platform.

19 And so the reasons that I was being given to not allow rhetoric that I saw to be
20 incredibly, increasingly violent and calling for violence were things that not only didn't
21 exist but were absolutely ridiculous.

22 Q So, just to condense some of that, you were presenting Twitter leadership
23 with a policy that would've allowed Twitter to take down posts that mentioned terms like
24 "1776," "civil war part two," "locked and loaded," and the response you got was to bring
25 up the potential for individuals shotgunning their beers?

1 A Yes. That is exactly what happened.

2 Q And did you think that was an adequate response, given what we were
3 seeing happening in the country in November 2020?

4 A It was anything but adequate. Again, I hoped that Del was joking at one
5 point and then recognized that she was serious, which, again, was more concerning,
6 because these were folks literally saying, "I am locked and loaded, and I am prepared to
7 overthrow the United States Government in a second civil war," with hashtags, right in
8 your face, and she was talking about shotgunning a beer.

9 Q Why do you think that was?

10 Ms. Ronickher. If you know.

11

BY [REDACTED]

12 Q If you know, yeah.

13 A I wish I knew. I think it was -- I can say what I think, which I believe it was
14 just Del's unwillingness or inability to see the seriousness of the nature.

15 I also think it very much kind of plays into a situation and scenario that I saw Del
16 fall into several times, which is essentially being the devil's advocate. And I think, in
17 many of these situations and scenarios when we're talking about things like incitement to
18 violence, the devil doesn't need to be in the conversation, nor does his advocate, right?
19 And I think that that was the role that Del was playing when we were talking about lives
20 being on the line.

1

2 [2:20 p.m.]

3

BY [REDACTED]

4

Q So before we move on from this document --

5

Ms. Ronickher. I was going to say, and maybe we can take a short break.

6

[REDACTED]. Yeah. I just had two or three more questions and then we can.

7

BY [REDACTED]

8

Q So this document, if you look at the header, it says that it was last updated

9

November 4th --

10

A Yeah.

11

Q -- which is the day after the election. And it says the status of the

12

document is that it shipped.

13

A Yes.

14

Q Could you explain what the status of this coded incitement policy was, to the best of your knowledge, as of Election Day 2020?

16

A Yes. So this -- let me talk about what status shipped means just to begin.

17

"Shipped" is a tech company term to mean that something has been approved and sent

18

out the door. I will say, this document, as we're currently looking at it, was not shipped

19

in this form. I can say that and I know that because if you look at the top of this

20

document, it says, please click to find the latest iteration of this guidance within this other

21

document.

22

So my understanding was that rather than actually shipping the coded incitement

23

to violence policy as written here within its incredibly nuanced format, rather the -- some

24

of the substance -- some of the ideas within this document were folded into another

25

document called the post-election protest and calls for interference, and that document

1 was shipped and approved and sent to content moderators around the world in order to
2 enforce.

3 Q So we'll get to that after the break, but I just want to be crystal clear that this
4 policy document, your team was never able to act on content using this document?

5 A Absolutely. So I -- as an example, I remember my immediate supervisor, at
6 one point, I was asking for clarification on what our approach to coded incitement to
7 violence was, and they said we do not have a coded incitement to violence policy, full
8 stop. And so it was an acknowledgment that this policy essentially, while it existed and
9 it hadn't been written, it did not exist as a policy that we could use or that could be
10 implemented.

11 Q So this tool that was ready made and basically almost final, and would've
12 allowed Twitter to take down posts like "civil war, part two, 1776," this was not part of
13 your toolbox in the weeks between Election Day and January 6th?

14 A Yes, we were not allowed to use it. One thing I will also say, it wasn't just
15 taking down the tweets, again, that said that specific language. It was that language
16 plus additional things, right. So it wouldn't have just been like a hashtag civil war, right.
17 It was a very -- it would express a like -- I believe the election was stolen, I'm ready to go
18 to war, hashtag locked and loaded, hashtag civil war, something along those lines.

19 Again, and I'm saying that because a lot of the -- the phrases, in and of
20 themselves, we did not find to be violative, but it was within the context that they were
21 being used, whether they were responding to a tweet that said something that was
22 incitement, but it was -- again, it was incredibly nuanced in the way that we wanted to
23 apply it.

24 Q Tailored to the dangers you saw in that moment?

25 A Absolutely.

1 Q Well, thank you. And we can take a break, if you want to come back in
2 10 minutes, 2:34?

3 A Uh-huh, yeah.

4 [REDACTED] All right. So we can go off the record at 2:24.

5 [Recess.]

6 BY [REDACTED]

7 Q And we can go back on the record at 2:37.

8 So I wanted to return to a couple of points we were touching on before the break
9 just around the, like, election period and then we can move into the post-election
10 guidance. First, right before the break you mentioned that at one point your direct
11 supervisor told you that you had no coded incitement policy, full stop, even though there
12 was this document. Do you remember when that conversation occurred?

13 A I do not remember the exact date of when it occurred, but it had to have
14 occurred somewhere between November, December, and before January 6th, so within
15 the -- that -- that 2-ish-month time period.

16 Q And what was the context of the conversation?

17 A Yeah. So it was a -- at that point, I had consistently and a number of times
18 raised the issue or attempted to seek guidance and clarity around what our team
19 should/could be doing as it related to coded incitement to violence. We continued and I
20 continued to see that same content that I was incredibly worried about continue to be
21 created and echo within its own chamber.

22 And so at that point, I believe this was just me once again trying to seek clarity and
23 ask, is it possible for us to do anything about this content? I think that we have a
24 problem on our hands. And her response to that was, again, to tell me that the policy
25 didn't exist so there was nothing we could do.

1 Q So this is separate from your conversation with Del Harvey when you're
2 going over phrases like "locked and loaded," but a similar outcome, which is that we don't
3 have a policy that's finalized to act on these sorts of tweets?

4 A Yes.

5 Q And zooming out a little bit, we talked a bit at the beginning about how the
6 September 29th comment to the Proud Boys by President Trump was seen by your team
7 as potentially crossing a line that could return to the platform. That was obviously a
8 comment that was directed at an extremist group that had already been banned from
9 Twitter, but I was wondering if there was increased traffic or a change in conversation
10 about the Proud Boys or other groups after that comment which disturbed you?

11 A Yeah, that's a good question. I -- if I -- if memory serves correct, I believe
12 that that, the "stand back, stand by" comment, it fanned the flames, right. And so while
13 we were seeing some borderline content and while it was addressed, again, at an
14 organization that might have been determined to be a violent extremist group, there
15 are -- Twitter is full of individuals who may not be card-carrying members of the Proud
16 Boys or of the Three Percenters or of, you know, Identity Evropa or any of these specific
17 groups but is full of individuals who share their ideologies or who share their fundamental
18 belief systems, who -- or who share in their desired outcomes.

19 And so what we saw was those individuals who espoused those beliefs essentially
20 being encouraged and stoked to participate in this behavior. I think we know this about
21 language, but groupthink is real, right. When you have one person saying something
22 and egging a crowd on, the crowd begins to echo that thing, if not go farther. And so, I
23 very much see the "stand back, stand by" as the beginning of this creation of this very,
24 very large echo chamber that we saw explode on January 6th.

25 Q Thank you. That's really helpful.

1 And going back earlier than late September, you were talking about how you'd
2 seen President Trump speak about weaponizing the platform --

3 A Uh-huh.

4 Q -- and we talked a little bit about the summer and some of his tweets over
5 the summer. But I wanted to ask you for an example of how you had seen some of his
6 rhetoric go on to the platform and potentially have an inciteful effect prior to "stand back
7 and stand by"?

8 A Yeah. I think -- prior to "stand back, stand by." I -- the thing that's coming
9 to my mind in general is Donald Trump's hateful rhetoric. And so the tweet that we
10 were specifically talking about earlier, "when the shooting starts the looting starts," was
11 found to be a violation of what was called a hateful conduct policy, or, essentially, the
12 hate speech policy.

13 And so what I often reflect on is the long-term and the short-term impact of the
14 everyday borderline gray nature of Donald Trump's rhetoric on Twitter, specifically as it
15 related to the othering of individuals or the incitement to fear of protected categories.

16 And so for me, I think about, honestly, the rise in hate crimes that happened all
17 around the United States following the election of Donald Trump. I believe there's
18 research that shows that, in the areas in which he hosted rallies, those neighborhoods
19 were increasingly more likely to encounter hate crimes within the neighborhood.

20 And so it was very clear that there was a correlation between his speech that,
21 again, was creating incitement of fear towards a protected category that was leading to
22 offline harm and an increase in hate crimes towards all protected categories within the
23 United States, and I think that sort of correlation had been happening for a long time.

24 Q And in our last session you mentioned a particular tweet where the
25 President singled out four liberal Congresswoman who are all women of color.

1 A Yes.

2 Q And do you remember what we talked about last time?

3 A I do.

4 Q Okay.

5 A Yeah, I'm happy to talk about it again.

6 Q That would be --

7 A Yes, yes, yes. So this was -- actually, that's a moment I think about very
8 often. So this was a series of tweets that Donald Trump had tweeted specifically at "The
9 Squad," as they're referred to, or women of color within Congress. And within this
10 extended episode of tweets, one of the things that he specifically said to these individuals
11 was to go back to where they came from.

12 Being trained in speech, being a Black American, I recognized that language very
13 quickly, and I also was trained on Twitter's policies and recognized that that language was
14 included within what our team had written as examples of very specific types of hateful
15 conduct that can be directed towards immigrants or towards Black Americans.

16 And so our team, in recognizing that and trying to do our job, made the
17 recommendation that for the first time, we use the newly launched public interest
18 interstitial, rather than continue along the lines that Twitter had taken for so long of
19 allowing Donald Trump to say whatever he want without any reings.

20 It was our recommendation that we finally had a tool in place to be able to stop
21 some of this and to create guardrails, that his language was not only against -- was not
22 only wrong and inciteful, but it was literally to the T within the examples that we used of
23 a violation of Twitter's policies.

24 And rather than apply standard operating procedure, rather than apply their own
25 rules, in that instance, Del Harvey, and what I don't think happened since, she literally

1 wrote her own assessment that was counter to the assessment that our team wrote in
2 which she argued that the tweet was not in violation of this policy that we said it was in
3 violation of, and that, rather, she created what I saw to be a ludicrous interpretation, but
4 she -- in her assessment, she said that if there was a possibility that what the language
5 actually was meant to say, rather than hateful conduct or rather than this inciting of fear,
6 was Donald Trump making a recommendation for these policymakers to go back to the
7 countries in which they once lived -- even though some of them were born in
8 America -- learn about politics or ways to make societal change in those countries, and
9 bring them back to the United States of America to apply within their policymaking here.

10 It was magical thinking, is the only way that I can really describe it. And I think it
11 was an example, again, of Del and Twitter's leadership's willingness to be unable to see
12 what was right before their eyes and willingness to infer/not infer, read things/not read
13 things depending upon how it best suited them to come to a conclusion that created the
14 least amount of controversy for the company.

15 Q And why would it have been controversial for the company to apply its rules
16 to Donald Trump?

17 A Yeah, that would've been the company essentially saying Donald Trump is
18 doing hate speech, and I do not believe that the company wanted to say that. They did
19 not want to make the proclamation that this individual, who happens to be the President
20 of the United States, is not only engaging in borderline language, but is engaging in
21 language that has crossed the line into what we know to be language that not only incites
22 fear, but causes offline harm and violence. And I think that admission, specifically at
23 that time, was more than what Twitter was willing to do, even though that, again, was
24 our team's recommendation.

25 Q Thank you.

1 And the last point of this, and I do want to open it up, is about the COVID
2 pandemic, and you mentioned that as sort of the incipient moment of some of the
3 discontent that boiled over on January 6th.

4 A Uh-huh.

5 Q The President obviously tweeted quite a lot about COVID restrictions --

6 A Uh-huh.

7 Q -- in States like Michigan, with a Democratic Governor. Did -- were there
8 instances where your team saw a spike coalescing of violent content in response to some
9 of his tweets regarding the pandemic?

10 A I believe it was always there, but it wasn't the majority, right. It wasn't
11 the -- and when I say that, I mean, I would click on a tweet from President Donald
12 Trump -- backing up, our technological capabilities were about none, and so, when I say I
13 was looking at a tweet, I was on Twitter.com using the search feature just like every other
14 American in order to do my investigation. And so, when I would do that, I would click on
15 Donald Trump's tweet and I would just scroll down and see the responses.

16 I believe earlier in the year of 2020, when we saw the beginning of these
17 calls -- they were calls to assemble. I think we might have talked about this last time.
18 But starting in 2020 when COVID hit, Twitter was actually taking down calls to assemble
19 that were coming from a lot of prominent conservative politicians. And I was the
20 individual who was arguing on behalf of these individuals and saying out loud, our policies
21 have to be content neutral. We have to put in place content-neutral restrictions. This
22 is First Amendment guidance, and in free expression jurisprudence. And to do anything
23 else and to limit or restrict the free expression of individuals because the argument was
24 that there was a public safety or public health risk. In my mind, again, with having to
25 balance the free expression and safety, I was saying, while I understand that there is this

1 public health risk and there is this risk to safety, this right of free expression and the right
2 to assemble in those specific instances, based on the language that I was seeing,
3 outweighed the safety risk.

4 Because what individuals were saying was, you know, I'm going to go on a
5 caravan, right, and I'm going to go protest, or I'm going to go stand outside of somebody's
6 building and protest. It was not the "I'm locked and loaded and ready to shoot" type of
7 language yet. And so that was a progression that we saw happen throughout the year,
8 yeah.

9 Q And going back to "stand back and stand by," that was a moment where the
10 violence came more to the fore --

11 A Yes.

12 Q -- on the platform?

13 A Yes. It was almost like in vogue, right. It was this -- it was no longer -- it
14 was no longer underneath some sort of cloud or shroud or we're not allowed to just
15 openly call for violence, and instead it was like a -- it was like a light switch. Like, all
16 right, our leader is saying this specifically and directly, we're ready to go.

17 Q Thank you.

18 I do want to move on to the next exhibit. Before I do, I wanted to ask if Ms.
19 [REDACTED] or Ms. [REDACTED] or Ms. [REDACTED] had any questions?

20 BY MS. [REDACTED]:

21 Q I do have just a couple of small questions, if I could. First, just to put a pin
22 on something [REDACTED] was asking you earlier, you said earlier that there is a direct -- or
23 there was a direct correlation between what he, President Trump, said at events, and
24 what would eventually come to the platform.

25 I was wondering if you could just put a little bit of color on that. What was the

1 timeline that you were looking at when you were seeing things that he was saying at
2 events reflected online, and what did that response look like?

3 A Yeah. I think that was -- it was pretty typical and pretty standard, right. I
4 think we have to think about the rhetoric of the former President, Donald Trump, right.
5 So the very first day that he announces that he's running for President, he comes down
6 the golden escalator and immediately begins calling Brown people rapists and bad
7 people, right. That was our introduction into this candidate as a President. That was
8 the rhetoric that he began his campaign with.

9 And so, understanding that and recognizing if this is the beginning of the platform,
10 that is also the language that he continued to use on -- and when I say the platform, I
11 mean his political platform, but that was the language that he continued to use on
12 Twitter and social media platforms, right. And so starting from that very beginning, we
13 have this sort of underlying current of borderline horrible language, or toxic language or
14 borderline hateful conduct language.

15 And so, for my entire time at Twitter, there was constantly this fear within our
16 team of -- like, we would write -- whatever policy we would write, whatever we were
17 doing, it was always like, Well, what happens when Donald Trump says it, right, well,
18 what do we do then, in every single area, because he was known to be the most
19 controversial Twitter user, and he was the individual that we knew would stretch the
20 limits the most.

21 And so it was very much a -- a watching and an understanding of if he is able and
22 willing to use this extreme rhetoric within his debates -- or not debates but his
23 rallies -- debates, I guess, debates and rallies, it was language that he was preparing, it
24 was language that he was kind of laying this groundwork for that would eventually come
25 to the platform, because it was essentially him testing, trial and error, whether or not this

1 language landed and doing it in person within individuals so that he could bring it to his
2 largest audience, which was Twitter.

3 Q So when you say it would eventually come to the platform, you mean he
4 would tweet it?

5 A Yes.

6 Q Not that other people would tweet it, but that he would?

7 A Yes.

8 Q Okay.

9 A Yes, that Donald Trump himself would tweet it.

10 Q So you're watching his events, you're seeing him say things, and you're just
11 bracing yourself for when is going to tweet that same thing?

12 A Yes.

13 Q Okay. That's helpful. Thank you.

14 You also mentioned that that "stand back and stand by" moment was an instance
15 where you saw a nexus of groups converging?

16 A Yes.

17 Q What groups were you talking about when you saw that convergence?

18 A Yes. So I -- I'm going to take this back a little bit to Charlottesville. And so,
19 I think we all remember Charlottesville and what was called the "Unite the Right Rally."
20 And I think we have enough research and individuals who have looked into that rally who
21 have said out loud that that rally did exactly what the name was, it did unite the right,
22 right. It brought all of these disparate groups that may have all read "The Turner
23 Diaries" but might have different interpretations or might, you know, hate one group
24 more than another or whatever their nuances were, together into a coalition for Donald
25 Trump.

1 And so what I saw and the nexus that I was referring to was, once again, that sort
2 of uniting of ideologies and understandings, that it was not just this one militia that
3 believes this certain thing is now saying this, but it is -- it is QAnon, it is Three Percenters,
4 it is also random trolls, right, it is all of these individuals on the internet who have become
5 a part of this amorphous movement that have begun to echo and say the exact same
6 things, and often who were like diametrically opposed. They like -- they had things in
7 common but they hated each other, and yet they're coming together to all say, like, All
8 right, we hate each other but we're ready to fight in civil war part two together.

9 Q Thank you. And you mentioned QAnon as part of that. Did you see
10 President Trump's account or the accounts of anyone in his close circle interacting or
11 promoting Q theories?

12 A Absolutely. I believe I assessed at least one or two retweets from the
13 former President's account that were specific ties to QAnon at the time. One of the
14 Watkins, I don't remember which one, I think the younger one, Code Monkey was his
15 Twitter handle --

16 Q Are you referring to Jim and Ron Watkins?

17 A Yes, the owners of 8chan. Code Monkey was a very prominent individual
18 on Twitter, which subsequently, after having watched documentaries and done research,
19 I've realized that he was actually gaming the Twitter algorithm in order to be that
20 prominent on there. And so, it was that sort of language that was also being used by
21 individuals who they believed to be behind -- actually the individual behind QAnon as
22 well.

23 Q Thank you.

24 And I also wanted to return to something Jacob asked you. You laid out this
25 timeline of the course of 2020 of starting with the COVID protests and then leading into

1 the election -- oh, sorry, leading into Black Lives Matter, then the election, and then up to
2 January 6th. And you identified very clearly on the timeline where you saw Trump
3 influencing that timeline when it came to the Black Lives Matter protests with, "When the
4 looting starts the shooting starts," and with regards to the election with the "stand back
5 and stand by." But you didn't speak about Trump at all with regard to that first period
6 with regards to the COVID piece.

7 A Uh-huh.

8 Q And I was wondering if that was because you didn't see his involvement the
9 same, or if you did see it the same, if you could explain what, if at all, you saw his
10 influence to be in that period.

11 A Yeah, that's a really great question. I think this goes back to a lot of the
12 hateful rhetoric that I was specifically talking about. So very early on in the COVID
13 pandemic, we saw Donald Trump make Asian folks and Asian-American folks the
14 scapegoat for the virus. And he started and began using language that was specifically
15 dehumanizing in speaking about the virus as well and comparing individuals to viruses,
16 right.

17 And so having studied language and understanding how it works, dehumanization
18 or the comparison of a human being to something that is non-human like, so to a microbe
19 or to a virus or to an insect, we know leads to direct offline violence. We've -- we've
20 learned this throughout history. If you think about the history of radio and you think
21 about the Rwandan genocide that was directly tied to the use of dehumanizing language,
22 that happened very early on in the beginning of the COVID pandemic.

23 I believe the other sort of main vein of abuse that Donald Trump was using during
24 that time was misinformation. And so for a time, at the very beginning -- when the first
25 COVID-19 misinformation policy was developed, it was my team that worked on it and

1 enforced that policy, we saw Donald Trump begin to trade in misinformation at a scale
2 that we had never seen before.

3 And we also -- I -- we saw in real time the politicization of the virus, and it go
4 from -- again, having watched the virus travel around the entire world at this point, so
5 knowing this thing has already impacted Asia, this thing has already impacted parts of the
6 world, and seeing the response and then watching it come to the United States become a
7 political issue, and then that sort of politicization -- I don't know why I can't say that word
8 today -- traveling across the entire globe into now we see this sort of idea of COVID
9 denialism, anti-vaccination and warriors, all of these individuals that exist, I honestly
10 believe, because of Donald Trump's ability to tweet freely at the beginning of the
11 pandemic.

12 Q So if I could try to summarize what I think you've said here with this timeline
13 over the course of 2020, and I would appreciate you agreeing or disagreeing, it sounds
14 like you're saying that he engaged in sort of a call-and-response over the course of 2020
15 that started out with what you'd characterize as racist and misinformation -- racist
16 rhetoric and misinformation, and then steadily grew over the course of the year to
17 become more and more violent.

18 A Absolutely.

19 Q Is that fair?

20 A Yes, that is fair.

21 Q Okay. The last thing I wanted to ask you about is just to elaborate a little
22 bit more on what you said about the resources that you had for content moderation.
23 You said when you were searching or doing content moderation you were just using
24 Twitter.com?

25 A Yeah.

1 Q I think when most people think about a company as large as Twitter, they're
2 imagining that you've got some really advanced, behind-the-scenes dashboard that is,
3 you know, running analytical tests and proactively pushing content to you to moderate.
4 Was that happening? What resources did you have?

5 A Yeah. You would think that working at a technology company, especially
6 one of the most impactful technology companies in the entire world, that we would have
7 some sort of analytical test or dashboard or something running in the back that would be
8 giving us information on how to make data-driven decisions. That was absolutely not
9 the case.

10 I often refer to Twitter as being held together by Google Docs and doc tape,
11 because literally the policy department -- I mentioned the coded incitement to violence
12 policy was a Google Doc, right. We hit "new" in Google Docs and we wrote our hearts
13 out. We sent the emails through Gmail, and we existed in a space of -- we were like
14 cavemen within Silicon Valley essentially and we had no tools.

15 And so, our -- when I talk about my searching through Twitter or me seeing things
16 on the platform, it was literally me, again, on Twitter.com, the public-facing website,
17 searching through hashtags. So I would look through hashtag "locked and loaded" and
18 see information that the entire world could see and was able to see. There was
19 no -- there was no technological tool or ability to do anything beyond that.

20 I think we talked a little bit about Profile Viewer 2 last time, which is the one
21 internal tool that we did have that gave us the ability to see accounts on the back end,
22 but that was so cumbersome that the reality was we didn't use that for search. We
23 didn't use that for monitoring. We used that when we specifically had either a tweet ID
24 that we could copy and paste, or we had a user ID that we could copy and paste, because
25 that tool was used for very specific analysis at a granular level and not the ability to see or

1 monitor or analyze Twitter, the platform, as a whole.

2 Q Did you ever advocate for something more advanced to allow you to do
3 better and more active content moderation?

4 A I believe we did. I think we talked about this a little bit in the last
5 deposition specifically around asking for new drop-downs within Profile Viewer 2 that
6 would've allowed us to characterize and label content in a way in which we could see
7 what policy violations we were taking content down for, which would've been wonderful
8 for things like the transparency report, which is Twitter's attempt to share information
9 and data with the public, but recognizing that even that data information being shared is
10 flawed because the tools that are being used to collect it don't even have the capability to
11 collect the information that is being wanted.

12 I also think about -- I think often of like this quote of what folks used to say
13 around -- if -- around tooling, they say, if you only have a hammer then you are likely to
14 see everything as a nail, right. And what we had was a hammer, and what we needed
15 and especially when it comes to speech, is like we need a scalpel, right. You need
16 something nuanced. You need something that you can go in pinpointed and be able to
17 not just bludgeon and remove, take down and do all of this damage, but be able to do
18 something thoughtful, like a coded incitement to violence policy that would've allowed us
19 to do our jobs better, but we did not have the capabilities.

20 Q So you see this call-and-response that Trump is developing online over the
21 course of 2020, you see it becoming more violent, correct?

22 A Yes.

23 Q You have no more sophisticated tools to track this than the average Twitter
24 user, correct?

25 A Yes.

1 Q You're asking for more tools to help with that, correct?

2 A Yes.

3 Q You're being told no?

4 A Yes.

5 Q You also are asking for policies like the coded incitement to violence policy
6 to try to put a stop to the spread of incitement online, correct?

7 A Yes.

8 Q And Twitter was telling you no?

9 A Yes.

10 Q Thank you. I'll turn it back over to [REDACTED]

11 [REDACTED] Thank you, [REDACTED]

12 BY [REDACTED]:

13 Q So now, based on that exchange, we can move to exhibit 2, which is the
14 policy guidance that you were given, correct? This is the post-election protest and calls
15 for intervention policy document?

16 A Yes.

17 Q So can you explain briefly what this document is?

18 A Yes. So this is a document that was prepared, I believe, by, as you can see,
19 the TI;dr, too long, don't read at the top, coordinated approach by health policy team.
20 So the health policy teams are both the site policy team, so both the safety policy, cyber
21 crime policy team, as well as the site integrity team, so the team that included the civic
22 integrity team that was dealing with elections.

23 This document was created by all of those teams together and specifically thinking
24 about, as you can see, the applicable policies. So which one of our policies from every
25 single one of our departments or from our areas or from our subject matter expertise do

1 we think that would be relevant in this case and how we should be applying those policies
2 within this specific instance.

3 Q So this was essentially Twitter's roadmap for how its staff should navigate
4 the post-election period?

5 A Yes.

6 Q And it was referencing other existing policies within Twitter that had gone
7 through the process to be cleared to put in their toolbox?

8 A Absolutely.

9 Q And the coded incitement policy had already been more or less cleared, as
10 we just saw, the day beforehand, November 4th?

11 A Yes.

12 Q But it was your understanding that the coded incitement policy was not fully
13 incorporated into this document?

14 A Absolutely, yes.

15 Q And you can see on page 8, if you want to flip there, there is some language
16 on issues that seem to be related to the coded incitement policy. And basically, at the
17 bottom of that page, you can see hope of harm, wish of harm language that we talked
18 about last time.

19 A Uh-huh.

20 Q Can you tell us why that is not the same level of nuance and dexterity that
21 you hoped to have with a full-fledged coded incitement policy?

22 A Yeah, absolutely. So --

23 Ms. Ronickher. And if you want to take a moment to read, would that be
24 helpful?

25 The Witness. Probably.

1

BY [REDACTED]

2

Q Take your time.

3

A Let me read that, and then I'm going to ask you to ask the question again.

4

Q Sure.

5

A Thank you, Alexis. Do you mind repeating your question?

6

Q Sure. So can you explain to us why the language we see at the bottom of

7

page 8 about wishing or hoping for harm is not as useful or nuanced or has as

8

much -- gives you as much dexterity to respond to potential incitement as your fully

9

fledged coded incitement to violence policy would have?

10

A Yeah. I think one real easy way to just look at it is to see the examples. So

11

working in content moderation, working in policy, I very much believe, as a policy person,

12

you can write whatever you want on a piece of paper, you can put down words, you can

13

make them sound as beautiful as you want to, but if you cannot operationalize that

14

policy, it absolutely does not matter.

15

And so, part of operationalizing a policy is coming up with examples. And so,

16

very much this policy in and of itself, it lacks the ability to be operationalized at scale

17

because it includes literally one example, right. And so, we're sending this to individuals

18

around the world, and the only idea, or only vision that they're being given of what coded

19

incitement is is this one specific example, versus the document that we had before which

20

had examples from literally all over the world of ways in which this could be applied or

21

different ways in which this could look.

22

So just by not including the examples in and of itself, we're lacking nuance, we're

23

lacking the ability to identify. We're literally not saying all of the information that could

24

be included within this.

25

I think the other piece is literally thinking about the policy violation that is being

1 used. So in reading through this, I was writing down, you know, what policies are we
2 talking about. This policy, at the bottom of page 8, was specifically called a "wish of
3 harm" policy. It was underneath, I believe, our abusive behaviors policy.

4 The "wish of harm" policy at the time was actually the policy in which the majority
5 of incitement to violence was coming down. So if content was on the platform that was
6 directly inciting violence, it was mostly being taken down under the "wish of harm"
7 category.

8 And so seeing this, I'm struck by recognizing that what we're -- what this
9 document is essentially saying is to continue to take down what has already being -- been
10 taken down, right. So we are going to continue to take down wishes of harm, we're
11 going to continue to take down these things that might look like incitement to violence,
12 but it absolutely does not get into the coded part, right, or the dog whistles or the nuance
13 or the additional pieces that we were hoping to encompass within the coded incitement
14 to violence policy.

15 Q So you had seen an amplification of this coded dog whistle call to violence
16 after President Trump's comment to the Proud Boys, coalescing of various far-right
17 groups using the language of civil war that wouldn't necessarily violent other Twitter
18 rules, and so you created a coded incitement to violence policy in the hopes that as this
19 rhetoric amplified on the platform you could use it to take down content that you
20 couldn't have previously taken down, expand the universe?

21 A Yes.

22 Q And what you're telling us now is that what was actually sent out to Twitter
23 worldwide after the election was a restatement of square one. You're back to square
24 one essentially?

25 A Yes, exactly.

1 Q And so you didn't have the capacity to respond to the coded language you
2 had been seeing about civil war and armed conflict?

3 A Absolutely. And looking back now, it's very clear that we did not stand a
4 chance. We were not prepared. We did not have the tools. We were not able to do
5 what we needed to be able to do.

6 Q And so the conversation you had with your supervisor where your supervisor
7 said, point blank, We have no coded incitement policy, is it accurate to say that your
8 supervisor was referring you back to this document here?

9 A Yes. One could say that, yes.

10 Q So why did you think that Twitter, just a day after it had finalized a coded
11 incitement policy, decided to take a step back and curtail the potential universe of tweets
12 you could be actioning, content you could be taking down?

13 A Why? I think only Del Harvey knows why. And I can't -- I can't speak on
14 her behalf or what was going on in her head at the time. But my reaction to it was,
15 again, that these threats were not being taken seriously.

16 Q So were others on your team also concerned? They were seeing the same
17 tweets as you. Did you have conversations internally in the days after the election
18 about the need for more robust action?

19 A Yes. Yes. So I was not -- I was not alone in being able to anticipate this.
20 My team was full of some of the most highly intellectual, skilled, experienced individuals,
21 and we had been doing this for a long time. And so we -- we, as a team, saw what was
22 happening. We, as a team, raised issues. I think it fell to me, again, as the most senior
23 and tenured person, to very often be the person who was the voice of those issues
24 because I was having conversations with additional teammates, with newer -- honestly
25 newer folks who were joining and were like, what is going on here? What do we do?

1 But it very much was a -- it was a team effort. I know we haven't talked about
2 January 5th and the meeting on January 5th, but even thinking about that and seeing, you
3 know, there were teammates literally in Dublin who were saying out loud, there might be
4 a violent speech tomorrow. There might be someone getting shot tomorrow. There
5 are all of these possibilities that they saw from the other side of the world that was
6 happening specifically on Twitter. This -- this was planned. January 6th was planned.
7 It was executed. It was analyzed in front of our faces using hashtags on Twitter.com for
8 anyone to see.

9 Q Can you add a little color to that? Especially in the early stages, sort of
10 November to early December of 2020, what were you seeing on the platform, and how
11 was it responsive to what President Trump was tweeting daily about the election?

12 A Yeah. Yeah. Again, it was this growing echo chamber, right, and it was
13 this -- started off as a "stand back, stand by," started off as a couple of people, you know,
14 calling for civil war or calling for some sort of overthrow, and then it began to grow and
15 rumble and become louder and louder until we saw what was actually -- what actually
16 happened on January 6th.

17 I will say, I know we've talked a lot about, I think it was the December 19th tweet,
18 up until that moment, again, it was this general sense and vagueness and this gathering
19 up of arms is the only way that I can explain. It was people saying, you know, we're
20 pissed off, we're mad, and, you know, rightfully so in many, many instances and
21 occasions, and in other instances, you know, making false claims about the election, right,
22 or things along those lines that would stir them up.

23 And so we saw this rhetoric go from I'm ready, willing, and able to, you know, the
24 moment in which Donald Trump gave the, what I honestly think -- it was like an RSVP that
25 was sent out, right. Like think about -- this is going to be a very bad analogy, but think

1 about like a barbecue, right. It's like, it's happening here and there, bring the meat,
2 right. That's essentially what happened. People were walking around saying, I am
3 ready to go to a mass shooting. I have my guns ready. Where is it happening? And
4 finally Donald Trump said, in D.C., at the Capitol, on January 6th.

5 Q I just want to bring it back to this policy choice that Twitter was making at
6 the time, because obviously Twitter had -- and we talked about this last time -- warnings
7 that it was able to put on tweets related to election misinformation.

8 A Uh-huh.

9 Q Correct?

10 A Uh-huh, yes.

11 Q And you are telling us today that those tweets were met by a chorus of other
12 tweets of folks making claims about potential violence and civil war-type claims?

13 A Yes.

14 Q But you were not able to take similar action on those tweets because they
15 were coded --

16 A Yes.

17 Q -- and not rising to the level of an existing policy violation?

18 A Yes.

19 Q And that could've been avoided had the coded incitement to violence policy
20 been fully implemented in early November?

21 A Absolutely, yes.

22 Q Well, I do want to talk briefly about what Twitter has told the select
23 committee about coded incitement, and this is going to involve a little bit of jumping
24 between the exhibits. But first, can we go quickly to exhibit 3?

25 A Uh-huh.

1 Q And this is a timeline that Twitter has provided to the select committee.

2 A Uh-huh.

3 Q So at the bottom of page 12, there is an entry that bears -- this is -- it says
4 page 14 at the top of the exhibit highlighted, but it's page 12 at the bottom. So the last
5 entry says that the safety policy team updated the coded incitement guidance to action
6 content that was in violation of essentially what we're talking about, the coded
7 incitement to violence policy. Based on your experience as the most senior member of
8 the safety policy team, what do you make of this statement?

9 A Give me one second to read it.

10 Q Yeah, please take your time to read it.

11 A Yeah.

12 Ms. Ronickher. Can you say again where it is on here that you're referencing?

13 [REDACTED] Sure. So it's the -- so it's page 12, it says page 12 at the bottom, page
14 14 at the top. And then the last entry, it's November 4, 2020.

15 The Witness. Okay. Yeah, I've read through it.

16 BY [REDACTED]:

17 Q So I can ask again, Twitter is essentially informing the select committee in
18 this document that your team, on November 4th, was starting to identify tweets where
19 coded language was being used to refer to violence, and they give the example of "locked
20 and loaded" and "stand back and stand by." And then Twitter goes on to state that
21 between November 4th and November 9th, your team was working to, quote/unquote,
22 surface and review those tweets that would fall under the coded incitement umbrella.
23 That seems at odds with a lot of what you've just told us about Twitter's approach, so I'm
24 curious to your reaction there.

25 A Yeah. So in reading it, I think that -- again, I do words for a living. And so

1 in reading this, you know, I'm struck by the fact that if you take it -- it's almost like
2 assessing a tweet; if you take it at its face value, it may be true, right.

3 So the first sentence in saying that we did up -- updated the coded incitement to
4 guidance -- incited -- Jesus -- updating the coded incitement to violence policy, right.
5 We looked earlier at the coded incitement to violence policy, and it does say that it was
6 last updated on November 4th, right. So that is technically true.

7 We did include within the guidance specific content that was likely to incite
8 violence. That is also true. We included things like "locked and loaded" and "stand
9 back and stand by." And from November 4th to November 9th, we did surface tweets
10 to review that included coded incitement to violence. So it is technically -- technically
11 these things did happen, and the policy was never approved though. We were never
12 allowed to use the policy. While these tweets may have been surfaced, nothing
13 happened to them and we were told we were not allowed to take them down.

14 And so I think that in reading this again, the letter of it may be true, but I think
15 that it is -- in reading it, it is -- it makes one want to believe that something was done, but
16 having been there and recognizing and knowing what happened, nothing happened.

17 Q So the tweets may have been surfaced and reviewed, but what you're telling
18 us now is that none of them were -- sorry, they were surfaced and reviewed, but what
19 you're telling us now is that none of them were removed from the platform?

20 A That's exactly what I'm saying.

21 Q And, in fact, you were not allowed to remove them from the platform
22 because, although the coded incitement guidance was updated, it was not approved or
23 allowed to be operationalized?

24 A Yes.

25 Q We can take down the exhibit.

1 So I believe you also gave us a copy of the review that you conducted, which is
2 exhibit 5.

3 A Yes.

4 Q And if I'm correct, I just want to refresh your recollection from last time,
5 that's -- this exhibit is a collection of tweets that your team reviewed between
6 November 4th and November 9th to give examples of what coded incitement looked like
7 on the platform. Is that correct?

8 A Yes.

9 Q So these are the tweets that had phrases like "stand back, stand by, "locked
10 and loaded," "1776," "civil war part two"?

11 A Yes.

12 Q And what was the purpose of you assembling this spreadsheet?

13 A Yes. So we were -- we were looking to see what was on the platform,
14 because, again, we were operating -- we were operating under the assumption -- and it
15 wasn't just assumption but it was based on our jobs -- that these things existed. This
16 was the data to prove not only did we think that it existed and it may be a problem, here
17 it is right in front of your face for everyone to collect and read that not only does this
18 exist, but it exists in the hundreds.

19 You also see we had a category for trend, right. These phrases were being used
20 so much that we saw trends happening within them. So this was very much our attempt
21 to say not only do we need a coded incitement to violence policy, we need it now, and
22 not just now we need it because of this, and can we pretty please take down these ones
23 that we are saying are a violation because of the urgency and need.

24 Q That's really helpful. So you were collecting these tweets. As the
25 post-election guidance came down, it did not include the coded incitement policy. You

1 weren't able to remove any of these tweets under the existing guidance, so was this
2 essentially your next gambit to say here's why we need a coded incitement policy?

3 A Yes. It was an attempt to have a data-driven approach to policy.

4 Q And to be crystal clear, a lot of these trends you were seeing were phrases
5 that had recurred throughout 2020, "locked and loaded," "stand back and stand by" was
6 the phrase that President Trump himself had used, and that's what you were seeing
7 amplified?

8 A Yes.

9 Q But who did you show this document to?

10 A So I specifically, myself, had a conversation with Del Harvey in which we
11 pulled up this document, and I went through it with her. I remember her even going
12 into Profile Viewer herself and looking at a couple of these tweets. She made some
13 comments about a couple of them and the accounts.

14 But, yes, I had a very specific conversation with Del. The point and the hope and
15 the goal of the conversation was to get approval for the coded incitement to violence
16 policy, one; and two, to get approval to use the coded incitement to violence policy to
17 immediately remove these tweets that we thought were in violation.

18 Q So this was your attempt to clean up the platform of some of this incitement
19 immediately in the aftermath of the election as things were starting to take a more
20 southward turn?

21 A Yes.

22 Q Was this the same conversation where Del Harvey was referring to
23 shotgunning beers or --

24 A Yes, this was -- this was -- actually, I don't remember if this was the exact
25 shotgunning beer conversation, but I do remember that this was at least the public

1 defense or the self-defense conversation.

2 Q Because you've -- you see highlighted trends "locked and loaded," things of
3 that nature, and her response was that these should not be seen as coded incitement
4 tweets?

5 A Yes. Yes. Her response was, what if someone is in their house locked and
6 loaded ready to defend themselves, even though, as you can see in this very tiny
7 language and font, not a single one of these tweets say that.

8 Q And so you left that meeting without successfully convincing Del Harvey,
9 who's head of the top of this policy tree, that you should have a coded incitement policy?

10 A Yes. I left the meeting highly disappointed in Del's decisions to, one, not
11 allow us to remove these tweets, especially given -- honestly, we had spent so much time
12 as a team reviewing and doing this work, it felt like it was a waste of our time having done
13 all of this work. So I was disheartened by the kind of disrespect for our team's time in
14 doing this and the general disregard for what I found to be the truth of what these -- what
15 these -- what these tweets were actually saying, what they were calling for in a way that
16 they needed to be removed and this policy needed to be implemented.

1

2 [3:33 p.m.]

3 BY [REDACTED]:

4 Q So, after that point, Twitter says between November 4th and November 9th
5 there was a review of potentially coded tweets. But you stopped that review --

6 A Yes.

7 Q -- and you were told that you could not remove any of the tweets?

8 A Yes.

9 Q And at that point did your team continue to review tweets?

10 A No. We stopped.

11 Q Because you thought it was fruitless, as you just said.

12 A Yes. Again, it was highly out of the ordinary for my team to review tweets.
13 We had what's called Twitter Services. That was our team that, whenever we got -- a
14 batch review is what it's called, so hundreds of tweets that needed to be
15 reviewed -- those were always sent to our sister team to review.

16 It was highly unusual for our team to specifically sit down around the clock, break
17 up a spreadsheet, and review tweets one by one by one. I think maybe on a regular day
18 I might have assessed, like, on a busy day, like, five tweets. So to do, like, 500 was an
19 astronomical task.

20 And so it did not make sense for our team -- we had to stop doing everything else
21 that we were doing in order to review these tweets. We could not stop doing our jobs
22 in order to continue this review that was completely fruitless.

23 Q So, just as a final point, when Twitter represents to the select committee
24 that there was a review of tweets under an updated coded incitement policy, there was
25 no removal of those tweets, and the updated policy was abandoned on November 9th

1 because you thought it was a waste of your team's time given the feedback from Del
2 Harvey?

3 A Yes, that's correct.

4 [REDACTED] I think that's all I had at this point. We can take a quick break,
5 because I know we've been going for an hour again.

6 Does anyone have any questions on this before we break?

7 [REDACTED] I think we need a quick break for a battery plug-in, so this is a good
8 place to do that.

9 [REDACTED] We can go off the record at 3:35 and stop the recording.

10 [Recess.]

11 BY [REDACTED]:

12 Q Great. So there is one more question I had for you on exhibit 3, which was
13 Twitter's timeline as provided to the select committee.

14 A Uh-huh.

15 Q On page 13, towards the bottom, there is an entry from November 5th, the
16 day we're discussing of the post-election guidance, where the entry says the post-election
17 protest guidance "outlined the application of trust and safety policies" and that this
18 guidance "integrates and supersedes" the coded incitement guidance from November 3,
19 2020.

20 So, based on our conversation, it does seem technically true that the post-election
21 protest guidance superseded the coded incitement policy that we talked about in the
22 beginning of the session, correct?

23 A Yes.

24 Q But, as you said, it took away the added nuance and dexterity of the coded
25 incitement policy, correct?

1 A Yes.

2 Q And it reverted to a, basically, conglomeration of existing Twitter policies to
3 use the same tools to get at things like a wish of harm or a violent incitement without
4 expanding to coded language.

5 A Yes.

6 Q So, given that, what do you make of this entry?

7 A Yeah. So I would say that the word "supersedes" is correct.

8 It's -- "supersedes," sorry. "Supersedes" is the word. All right. Supersedes. It
9 definitely supersedes the coded incitement guidance.

10 I think that "integration" is a stretch. I believe that it might have thought about
11 the spirit of the policy, but it in no way, shape, or form integrated the nuance, the
12 analysis, the assessment, and the information from the coded incitement to violence
13 policy.

14 Q At this point, that did have a negative impact on your ability to remove the
15 sort of language we've been discussing, "locked and loaded"?

16 A Absolutely. We were unable to remove because we did not have a policy in
17 place.

18 Q And we'll get to the President's December 19th tweet in a moment, but I
19 wanted to ask if there were any tweets in the first few weeks after the election from the
20 President that stuck out in your mind as eliciting a particularly problematic
21 call-and-response dynamic that you couldn't combat because of the lack of a coded
22 incitement policy.

23 A I don't know if there are specific tweets that come to my mind, because,
24 again, you know part of my daily job was reviewing what Donald Trump tweeted, and he
25 tweeted a lot.

1 And so I'm sure that I did at points review things, but what is coming to my
2 memory as a moment of concern was I remember when Donald Trump took to Twitter to
3 not concede the election. And I remember that being a turning point and
4 recognizing -- and, again, having heard the language happening offline of him beginning
5 to -- even going into the election and saying, "The only way that I lose this election is if it's
6 rigged," right? So setting the stage for this to happen.

7 Seeing that it was not only going to happen, he was going to claim that it was a
8 stolen election, and then going on Twitter specifically to not concede, it informed me that
9 the debate was going to play out in public, right? It was going to happen on Twitter.
10 And it was not going to be these one-off instances happening online, but, rather, it was
11 full-court press on what Donald Trump was going to say on his Twitter platform.

12 Q And in response to his tweets about not conceding the election, did you see
13 a similar amplification of the trends you'd already been seeing?

14 A Yes.

15 Q Basically calls for a civil war?

16 A Yes.

17 And that, again, it was highly concerning to me, right? Because that was part
18 of -- that was the reasoning behind the need to take up arms, right? People were ready
19 and willing and able to do so beforehand, but there wasn't a real logical connection or
20 theory behind why it was absolutely necessary to overthrow the government.

21 And it wasn't until Donald Trump's claims of a stolen election and his refusal to
22 concede that we saw individuals saying, "Fantastic. Like, I've been ready to take up
23 arms. I've been locked and loaded. Now I have a reason, and that's because this
24 election has been stolen. And the person that it's been stolen from is holding fast and
25 holding firm in their beliefs of this thing being stolen and being unwilling to concede."

1 Q But those tweets remained on the platform.

2 A They might still be up now.

3 Q And this is the same timeframe, November 4th to November 9th, where you
4 were collecting these tweets and presented them to Del Harvey, that's exactly when
5 President Trump refused to concede.

6 A Yes. Exactly. Which, again, why I was so concerned and felt the necessity
7 to remove these things immediately, because of the swirl that it was creating.

8 Q Were there any other examples of high-profile tweets that you were unable
9 to action during this period because of the lack of coded incitement guidance, either from
10 politicians or other social media influencers on the far right?

11 A Nothing is coming to my memory of specific tweets from individuals during
12 this timeframe around this specific language.

13 Q That's totally fine.

14 But one tweet that we know there's lot of discussion around and we talked about
15 last time is the President's tweet on December 19th, when he first mentions January 6th
16 and tells his supporters, "Be there, will be wild."

17 Can you tell us again why your team and you felt that this was a critical turning
18 point?

19 A Yeah, absolutely.

20 So, again, this is December, so we're talking -- November, December -- a full
21 month. So a full month had elapsed from the time in which, you know, the election had
22 happened, we saw these claims that the election was stolen, and then we saw individuals
23 continuing and ramping up in this rhetoric of being locked and loaded, standing back,
24 standing by, ready for the civil war part two, ready for a new American revolution, ready
25 for all of these things.

1 And there was no formal organization or formal direction for where that rhetoric
2 was heading. My fear was, and what I articulated to Del Harvey was, people are going
3 to shoot each other, right? I didn't know where, I didn't know when, but I knew that
4 something was going to happen.

5 Q And if I could cut in briefly, when you articulated that to Del Harvey, do you
6 remember the date of that warning to her?

7 A Yeah, I believe it was in the same November 4th/5th meeting that we were
8 previously talking about.

9 Part of the argument that I made as to why we needed to remove these tweets
10 was me saying specifically: People are going to start shooting each other. Because it
11 was clear. People were literally talking about shooting other people.

12 And it wasn't until this December 19th tweet in which -- as I mentioned before, it
13 was like the RSVP card of: We're ready to do coup! Come, bring your guns.
14 Time -- whatever the time was. Date -- Washington, D.C., Capitol. Date, January 6th.
15 Right? Location -- all of this, time, date, location, it was all spelled out within this tweet.

16 And so, for me, it clearly became a rallying point, a point of inflection, in which,
17 you know, you have this -- I'm thinking about this in very, like, specific First Amendment
18 jurisprudence terms, right? You have the crowded theater, and you have Donald Trump
19 who is shouting "fire" and saying, "Not only is there fire, but we're doing it at this time,
20 this place. Let's go."

21 Q But that tweet does not mention violence.

22 A No.

23 Q It has, obviously, a call to be wild, which, as a First Amendment scholar, you
24 know would not be the same thing as "fire" in a movie theater.

25 So would you have wanted a policy such as the coded incitement policy to

1 respond to that tweet? Because from my reading of some of these other post-election
2 guidelines, that tweet in and of itself wouldn't have been in violation.

3 A Yeah. I can't say that if the coded incitement to violence policy would've
4 been in place that it would have applied to the December 19th tweet. Again, Donald
5 Trump was a unique user who sat above and beyond the rules of Twitter.

6 I think that, you know, in an imaginary world in which we did have the coded
7 incitement to violence policy, I could see a place in which our team would've made a
8 recommendation to use it on this tweet. Would that have been approved? Who
9 knows, right?

10 But I think that this is a very -- this tweet is very indicative, again, of the type of
11 language and the type of tweeting that Donald Trump engaged in. On its face value, if
12 you just read it without any sort of contextual engagement with it, there is nothing that
13 seems to be wrong, right? It's saying there is a big protest. There's nothing wrong with
14 protests. People have the right, the First Amendment right, to protest. It's saying it's
15 going to be big, it's happening in D.C., it's happening at this time, be there, it's going to be
16 wild. Right? On its face, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that tweet per se.

17 But when you take it and you look at it and you see the responses that were
18 coming to it and you see the environment into which it was included, it becomes
19 problematic, because the "will be wild" became interpreted to mean "we're gonna start
20 shooting," right, or "we're going to do violence," versus, you know, "we're gonna have
21 this great, direct action that happens at this protest in which we stand up to our
22 government and we articulate our grievances about what we believe to be a fraudulent
23 election."

24 Q So you had been watching this call-and-response dynamic between
25 President Trump and his followers on Twitter for a year at this point. When you saw the

1 response to the December 19th tweet, why did your alarm reach new heights?

2 A Because it was no longer amorphous and it was no longer a nameless,
3 faceless maybe battle that could happen in the near future and, instead, became a
4 crystallized event, right? And that was new.

5 And not only was it new, but I think it also -- it served as a kind of recruiting tactic,
6 right? And so we saw this rhetoric, but we also saw people begin to engage in this
7 rhetoric more than ever, people who had not been engaging in this rhetoric. It became
8 kind of like a fire hose, right?

9 First it was just the fringe of the fringe who was calling for the civil war, right?
10 Then it became a little bit more mainstream. And then now you have the President of
11 the United States, who is leaning into this exact same argument that there should be a
12 violent overthrow of the government and/or a civil war, stating this openly on the Twitter
13 platform, and individuals who may not have been inclined yet to participate feel as if their
14 Commander in Chief is now urging them to be involved.

15 Q So you're saying that the coded language -- "locked and loaded,"
16 "1776" -- the incidence of that sort of language on Twitter proliferated in the wake of the
17 December 19th tweet?

18 A Yes. Not only did they proliferate, but they got even more specific. So
19 this is when we starting seeing the hashtag "J6". That became included within the rest
20 of these hashtags, right?

21 So, before, it would say, "I'm locked and loaded. The election's been stolen.
22 I'm ready to fight," right? Hashtag "lockedandloaded." After January 19th, we would
23 see, "The election's been stolen. I'm standing back and standing by. I'm locked and
24 loaded. I'm ready to go," hashtag "J6," right?

25 And so it was very specific to: Not only am I going to engage in this action -- not

1 only am I ready and willing to engage in this action, I'm going to engage in this action, and
2 I'm going to do it at this specific place at this specific time.

3 ██████████ And, just to clarify, you said "after January 19th." I think you
4 meant December 19th?

5 The Witness. I did mean the December 19th tweet. Thank you.

6 ██████████ Thank you, ██████████

7 BY ██████████

8 Q So did you and your team see a hashtag "J6" trending before the
9 December 19th tweet? Do you recall?

10 A I don't recall -- I do not recall seeing "J6" happen before this December 19th
11 tweet. And if it was happening, it was not something that was to the scale of which it
12 occurred and happened after this December 19th tweet. After December 19th, every
13 single day, the rhetoric that we had been seeing started including this "J6" hashtag.

14 Q So, for the first time, these coded calls to civil war, references to "1776,"
15 "stand back and stand by," had a date and a time attached to it.

16 A Yes.

17 Q What was your team's reaction? And what action and steps did you take to
18 try to alert senior leadership about this dynamic that was unfolding?

19 A Yeah. I did not notice a change in tenor from leadership, which was, again,
20 incredibly concerning to me.

21 I believe it was around this time in December when I sent a message to a member
22 of the leadership of the site policy team specifically saying, you know: I've been waving
23 the red flag about this situation for quite some time. I'm really concerned about the
24 potential for a mass-casualty event or mass-scale violence. And I'm even more
25 specifically concerned about this timeframe of January 4th through 6th, specifically the

1 6th, because of the fact that this is when electors are coming to cast their votes and also
2 because of what Donald Trump has said.

3 So I remember specifically reaching out to someone and expressing my concern
4 of: Not only am I worried about violence, not only I have been worried about this for a
5 long time and trying -- but it now has specificity to a way that I am beyond concerned.

6 Q I think we can actually bring up that message. So exhibit 6, page 8, I believe
7 is --

8 A Yes.

9 Q So this is the message that you sent to one of your supervisors or a senior
10 leader?

11 A Yes. Not one of my supervisors, but this was a member of the leadership
12 team of site policy. And this was to one of the most senior people, again, on the team
13 that was responsible for terrorist organizations, violent extremist groups, and child sexual
14 exploitation.

15 Q So you can see that this message is from December 29th, 10 days after the
16 President's tweet.

17 A Uh-huh.

18 Q Fair to say that you had not seen a shift in how leadership of Twitter was
19 treating this potential threat in those 10 days?

20 A I had seen no shift, no.

21 Q And at that point you had already had conversations with Del Harvey about
22 the coded incitement policy and basically found it to be a dead-end.

23 A Yes.

24 Q So what were you hoping that Twitter leadership might do to head off what
25 you saw as a potential disaster?

1 A Yes. I was hoping, in reaching out to this individual, because it was a
2 separate team, my hope and my desire was maybe -- maybe it was just our team that was
3 kind of hamstrung and that maybe this other team had some sort of leeway or had
4 something in place or was working on something and that maybe -- I was reaching for
5 straws, right? I was just hoping that somebody was doing something because we were
6 not allowed to do anything.

7 And so, recognizing the terrorist-organization/ violent-extremist-group aspect of
8 what was happening on January 6th, again, with all of these known militia groups and
9 nationalist organizations, I wondered if, given that convergence, this team maybe was
10 working on something that I hadn't heard of.

11 Q But they were not.

12 A No, they were not.

13 Q I was wondering if you could read the message starting at "essentially" just
14 so we can have it in the record?

15 A Yeah, of course.

16 I say, "Essentially, between the 'locked and loaded' messages we've seen for
17 months and Trump turning to the fringes, I am worried about January 4th through 6th
18 when these groups are convening on D.C. for the election certification. I am not sure if
19 it has been discussed or if we have monitoring in place. I feel like I've been waving the
20 red flag on this real potential for extreme violence for a while, and I don't know what else
21 to do."

22 Q And so the response you received is that there was no monitoring in place,
23 correct?

24 A Yes.

25 Q And, obviously, Twitter's service spans countries beyond the United States.

1 A Yes.

2 Q And I'm wondering if you thought it was atypical for there not to be
3 monitoring or groups convened to essentially make sure Twitter did not host content that
4 threatened the peaceful transfer of power in other countries. Is that something that
5 you had dealt with in your job?

6 A Yes. So, by this point, again, I'd been working at Twitter for almost 2 years,
7 which is an eternity in Twitter time, and I was the most tenured person on the team.
8 And so I had seen and worked a lot of events, and I had worked protests on almost every
9 continent on this globe.

10 When I first started, I was working on protests -- the yellow jackets protest in
11 France. I worked protests that turned violent in India. I worked protests in Brazil. I
12 worked protests in Hong Kong. We worked protests in Palestine. Like, we worked
13 protests around the world.

14 And so it was pretty standard operating procedure that, you know, our jobs were
15 to be in the know of what was happening around the world. And so, if we were made
16 aware or had knowledge of what I think I referenced earlier, a sociopolitical event,
17 right -- so there was something tense happening on the ground and some sort of
18 sociopolitical escalation -- it was very normal for my team to write guidance.

19 And the guidance would essentially say, you know: Here's a background of
20 what's happening on the ground. We recognize that there are escalating tensions, and
21 because of these escalating tensions, we have decided we are going to adopt and/or
22 change our policies and/or rearrange our balance here between free expression and
23 safety because we recognize that there is a need to err on the side of caution so that
24 individuals are not physically and/or violently harmed offline.

25 This happened in almost every single one of the instances that I mentioned that

1 we wrote guidance for around the world. In those instances, again, we would anticipate
2 actions that might occur based upon the circumstance or situations.

3 And so you talked about, you know, transfer of power in elections. My brain is
4 not remembering an exact analogous situation in which there was specifically a transfer
5 of power, but I think about Hong Kong in which there was legislation, right, and people
6 protesting that. And we knew in advance that this legislation was being proposed.
7 Given the sociopolitical context into which it was being introduced, there was a high
8 likelihood of violence.

9 And so we created guidance for protests specifically in Hong Kong that thought
10 through things like, what if a protester on the streets is violent towards a police officer, or
11 what if a police officer on the street is violent towards a protester, do we keep that
12 content up, do we take that content down, and making those sort of determinations in
13 advance.

14 So, to answer your question, it was incredibly atypical for us to not have some sort
15 of guidance or something in place leading up to something that was so obvious and so
16 important. And I believe that that very much added to my frustration, because I was
17 being forced to act outside of standard operating procedure and allow the flow of
18 information to be used and weaponized and created in ways that we had never allowed
19 before.

20 Q So why was the post-election guidance that was released on November 5th
21 insufficient to meet the guidance needs of Twitter's employees for January 6th
22 specifically?

23 A Yeah. Again, I think it has to do with the type of language that was being
24 used. In here, I mention Trump turning to the fringes, right? And I think we talked
25 about this a little bit earlier, about how his language had gone from -- while, you know,

1 again, from the very beginning of the campaign was coming out of left field, it kept going
2 even further and further and further, into the point in which these were no longer the
3 small voices within the echo chamber but were the loudest. I think you all called them,
4 like, Team Crazy or something, right?

5 Like, it became very clear that those voices were becoming the loudest and
6 Donald Trump was listening to those voices -- not only listening to them, but regurgitating
7 the same information and the same sort of claims and false claims that they were making.

8 Q Did you or other members of your team ever request permission to write a
9 sort of January-6th-specific guidance?

10 A That's a great question. I think that coded incitement to violence was our
11 attempt to do that. I don't know that we -- actually, on January 5th, I specifically asked
12 if we could use what was called the BLM playbook.

13 So it was another document, another Google document, that was created over the
14 summer of 2020. It was not in anticipation, but it was after protests had broken out
15 literally around the entire globe.

16 And so, on January 5th, I made the recommendation that, going into January 6th,
17 maybe we should use that playbook, because it was the closest thing that we had and we
18 were already familiar with it, we knew how it worked, and maybe we should implement
19 that as a stopgap measure going into January 6th.

20 I was told in the meeting on January 5th that we should not do that.

21 Q And this was at the safety policy staff meeting on January 5th?

22 A Yes.

23 Q That was -- we'll get to it, but the person who told you you could not do that
24 was the supervisor from the European division?

25 A Yes.

1 Q Thank you.

2 So I did want to ask a couple more questions on the changes you saw between the
3 19th and the 5th, let's say. Obviously, there was more content that was coded calls to
4 violence that you were seeing and your team was seeing.

5 Was there ever any sense that there were individuals using Twitter to coordinate
6 travel to Washington?

7 A That's a great question. I don't know -- I don't know that I saw specific
8 travel coordination. But what I did see was kind of a roll call of, like, I'm gonna be there,
9 I'm gonna be there, I'm gonna be there.

10 Q Was that between members of specific groups, militia affiliates or others, or
11 was it a broader coalition?

12 A Much broader coalition. This was just random Twitter users at this point
13 that were joining in the chorus of saying, "We're doing coup on January 6th. I would like
14 to be there."

15 Q And was there content that discussed whether or not it was feasible to bring
16 firearms to D.C. that you remember flagging?

17 A I don't remember seeing any content about whether -- there never was a
18 question about bringing firearms. The firearms were coming. And it was very clear
19 that the weaponry was involved.

20 Q And how about discussions specific -- I guess this wouldn't be so coded, but
21 actual violence against particular targets, whether it's the Vice President, the Speaker of
22 the House, other Members of Congress? Were you seeing that sort of general planning
23 on Twitter?

24 A That's a good question. I don't know that we were not seeing it, right?
25 And I think I say that because, at this point, part of the general conversation that these

1 individuals were participating in very much had political targets and political enemies.
2 And so I remember -- my brain is giving me memories of discussion of Nancy Pelosi, her
3 being the enemy.

4 I believe at this point leading into January there was, like, the start of a turn
5 against Vice President Mike Pence that was starting to occur, and I think at this point
6 individuals were calling on him to "do the right thing." And there was also this sort of
7 sense of, "If he doesn't do the right thing, I'm locked and loaded." So, yeah.

8 Q So the President tweeted over a dozen times between the 19th and the 6th
9 about the event.

10 A Uh-huh.

11 Q What was the effect that you saw of those subsequent tweets?

12 A Yeah. I mean, it's like a party promoter, right? It's someone who's saying,
13 like, "My event's coming up. Hope you're gonna be there." And it worked, right? We
14 saw him consistently plug this event, and we saw people, again, being excited, being
15 enthused to participate, to join in the call that's coming from their Commander in Chief.
16 And it only fanned the flames.

17 Q And would you say that it expanded the universe of users on Twitter who
18 were joining in this sort of coded calls for violence?

19 A Absolutely, yes.

20 Q But you never had a successful conversation in that timeframe with a
21 supervisor where they thought it might be a good idea to take steps either against the
22 President's account or against coded incitement generally?

23 A Yes. There was no appetite whatsoever to remove any of the content or do
24 anything about the content.

25 Q Did you remember any specific conversations where that was actively

1 rebuffed, or it was more of an understanding that there was no appetite?

2 A Well, I mean, leading up into January 5th, you know, I brought up the -- in
3 that meeting, I believe my agenda item was, you know, can we get some clarity on our
4 approach to coded incitement to violence?

5 Q Uh-huh.

6 A And so I very much was still trying to bring up something. I knew
7 something very, very bad was going to happen, and I knew that it was technically part of
8 my job to anticipate these things and care for the safety of humanity. And I was
9 dumbstruck at how I was unable to do my job. And, as I'm sure all of us here -- like, I'm
10 a person who likes to do my job well. And I was hindered from doing it. I was literally
11 unable to do my job.

12 And so I kept trying to do my job and trying to do it well by seeking clarity, seeking
13 information, proposing solutions. But every single point, I was rebuffed.

14 Q Well, that's a good transition, I think, to move into the January 5th meeting,
15 but before I do -- oh, hold on.

16 All right, seeing no other questions, in our last meeting, we did talk in depth about
17 this January 5th meeting, but I wanted to ask you just to restate for the record who was
18 present at this meeting and what was its purpose.

19 A Yes. So the meeting that happened on January 5th was a regularly
20 scheduled meeting of the safety policy team. The safety policy team included three
21 different teams -- one in the United States, one in the Asia-Pacific region, and one in the
22 Europe, Middle East, and North Africa region. This meeting that happened on
23 January 5th was a regularly scheduled meeting between the European team and the
24 United States team.

25 Like all of our meetings at that time, it was recorded. We recorded our meetings

1 specifically because of this time overlap in which we wanted to make sure that our team
2 members in the Asia-Pacific region were able to review the information and the
3 conversations that we had within the European-U.S. team and the European team was
4 also able to review and understand the conversations that we had with the Asia-Pacific
5 team.

6 And so it was a regularly scheduled team meeting. You asked me who was
7 there --

8 Q It seems like those three teams?

9 A So it was just the European team and the United States team. And that
10 included, I believe, the site policy manager of the United States, who had just been hired I
11 think the month before, and all of the individual contributors, like myself, and full-time
12 employees on the United States team, as well as the subject-matter experts and
13 individual contributors within the Europe, Middle East, and North Africa team.

14 Q So, the night before January 6th, there was not any special convening of
15 senior leadership to speak with the individuals responsible for safety policy; it was just a
16 regularly scheduled meeting without even, it seems like, your typical supervisor present.

17 A Yes. My supervisor had experienced a death in the family and was not able
18 to attend that meeting. But, yes, you are correct; there are was no special meeting
19 called. No.

20 Q And so, when you walked into the meeting, or entered the Zoom --

21 A Yes.

22 Q -- January 2021 -- what was your level of concern?

23 A Yeah. I don't think that I can overstate how concerned and how much I had
24 been trying to wave the red flag at that point. I felt like I was beside myself. It was
25 worse than, like, watching a car accident happen, right? It was very much a deep sense

1 and knowledge in November that I told Del people were going to shoot each other. And
2 so, going into this January 5th meeting, I knew people were going to shoot each other
3 tomorrow, and there was no way around it.

4 And, as a human being and an American, I was beyond concerned that we were
5 walking into this day completely unprepared. And so part of what I was trying to do,
6 again, as a leader on the team, was for one last -- one last chance, trying to ask, what can
7 we do with coded incitement? Because it's there, it's been here, I have a feeling that it's
8 going to play into something very, very, very bad that happens tomorrow. And I was
9 just really hoping against all hope that maybe we would've been able to do something.

10 Q So the reason why you wanted to be able to use the coded incitement policy
11 in the hours before the 6th is, essentially, in layman's terms, you would've been able to
12 take down posts about civil war egging on folks who were, quote/unquote, "locked and
13 loaded" and take down the temperature of what was going on on the platform?

14 A Absolutely, right? So I referred to this echo chamber, right, and part of
15 what I was hoping we would be able to do is douse some water on that, right? Because
16 the President was dousing gasoline. And I was hoping that if maybe we were able to
17 remove some of this content and remove some of this information it would die down, it
18 wouldn't be as bad, and maybe we might be able to contain something.

19 Q And your team had already drafted a policy that would've allowed you to do
20 precisely that.

21 A Yes.

22 Q And it had been essentially finalized.

23 A Yes.

24 Q And Twitter could have sent it out that night -- in fact, they sent it out the
25 next day at around 5:00 p.m. -- in a matter of hours, right?

1 A Yes.

2 Q But, if we go to exhibit 6, page 26, we can see how you -- when you asked for
3 updates on coded incitement, towards the bottom of the page, you can see that the note
4 says, "There are no more updates on this."

5 So, even when you asked, and there was a policy that could've been promulgated
6 quickly, the response from your supervisors was that there was nothing to say.

7 A Yes. That's correct.

8 Q The sentence after "no more updates on this," so the second line, "We have
9 not rolled it out yet," how did you take that, given the document we looked at earlier,
10 that this policy had been shipped, as you said, and seemed to be in pretty full form?

11 A It was ludicrous, right? We had what we needed at our disposal, already
12 written, ready to go. It would've literally taken an email to send to one email alias. It
13 wouldn't have been a complicated process. And yet I was being told no.

14 Q And, obviously, you can only speak from your personal knowledge. Why do
15 you think there was still that resistance? The potential for violence on January 6th was
16 not a remote possibility in the public sphere at that point, so why the resistance?

17 A You know, the manager in Europe echoed Del Harvey's kind of
18 considerations around the public -- or the defense of, you know, being locked and loaded
19 in your house and maybe you need to self-defend. And, again, it's just not what we
20 were seeing. And it seemed like the company was intent on holding this imaginary line,
21 for whatever reason, despite and contrary to the evidence that was clearly in our faces.

22 Q In your opinion, would that have been the case if we had been dealing with
23 the potential for a violent protest in another country with another leader's supporters
24 leading the charge?

25 A If January 6th and anything like it, that language, if we would've seen that

1 happen in any other country with any other leader, Twitter would've acted completely
2 different. And I think that was part of my frustration and part of my outcry.

3 I remember specifically sending a message, I think it was around December, to the
4 larger health policy team, the team that worked on the protest and election guidance,
5 and saying to them, if this was any other country -- because, again, we worked in almost
6 every country around the globe -- but if this was any other country and we were seeing a
7 situation in which the results of a fair election were being openly contended, were being
8 called false by the ruling party, and that ruling party and its members and its supporters
9 were openly calling for civil war and/or insurrection and/or coup, how would we be
10 handling this?

11 And I only posed that question because of the hypocrisy that I saw happening,
12 right? I knew how we had handled situations, say, for instance, in India. During 2020,
13 there were several protests that happened that led to violence, and I watched as we
14 changed our rules. There was a point in time in which we had rules that only applied in
15 India for a very certain amount of time.

16 And it was that sort of exceptionalism, that sort of understanding that people's
17 lives are at stake, we need to do something about it, that I didn't see happening in this
18 case. And that frustrated me and that confused me, to no avail.

19 Q So Twitter could have approved the coded incitement policy for just a week
20 period in the U.S. to get through this sociopolitical crunch?

21 A Yes. Absolutely.

22 Q That had been done in the past?

23 A It had absolutely been done in the past. So, for instance, the guidance I
24 was talking about that we had initiated in India, it was time-bound, right? It existed for
25 a certain period in which there was violence on the ground. And at the point in which

1 those tensions ended, we sent an email to the team that was doing the resource and
2 request and review, saying, "Thank you so much for your time. This crisis has ended.
3 You may stop now."

4 Q But that was not how the January 5th meeting resolved. There was no
5 do-out of that nature.

6 A There was nothing.

7 Q So you left that meeting, and what happened?

8 A Yeah. I will say, even in that meeting -- I've watched the meeting
9 subsequently, and what I saw happen within myself was me very much falling back on my
10 last resort, and I recognized and saw myself reach my last resort and my last limit in the
11 point of saying, "I need to just say this for the record," right, and saying out loud, knowing
12 that the video was being recorded, knowing that we were going into something historic,
13 that I was very concerned about what I had been seeing for months, what I was currently
14 seeing that day, and what I believed to happen the next day.

15 And I don't believe -- there was never an instance in which I had done that before.
16 And I don't believe that I would've done that if it wasn't for the fact that I was literally at
17 my wits' end.

18 And I needed to say -- I think we talked about this last time. At the end of that
19 meeting was when I sent the Slack message to my colleague that said, "When people are
20 shooting each other in the streets tomorrow, I'm going to try and rest in the knowledge
21 that we tried." Because I recognized there was nothing that we could do, the next day
22 was going to be carnage, and I did not want us to have to feel like we were carrying that
23 burden, because we had literally tried to do everything that we could do.

24 Q And, to close this out, you mentioned what you were seeing on the platform
25 that day.

1 A Yes.

2 Q I wanted to return to the question I posed earlier: Were there particular
3 strategic items that you saw trending about entry points onto the Capitol?

4 There are discussions on other platforms, like thedonald.win, about maps of the
5 tunnels underneath the Capitol --

6 A Uh-huh.

7 Q -- nooses, gallows.

8 A Yeah.

9 Q Was there anything of that nature that you saw?

10 A I'm sure that I did see it, but I don't specifically have, like, recollection of
11 specific tweets.

12 What I do remember is, in that team meeting, a colleague going on Twitter.com,
13 hitting the search feature, and literally searching "#lockedandloaded" in the middle of the
14 meeting on January 5th and saying, like, "I am looking at content right now that is easily
15 accessible that's not great," and we were told in that moment, there's nothing that we
16 can do about it.

17 Q Well, I don't know if there are any other questions on the 5th?

18 Okay. We can go on to the 6th, if that's all right with you?

19 Ms. Ronickher. Uh-huh.

20

BY [REDACTED]

21 Q So I wanted to first ask, the morning of January 6th, when work began, how
22 big was the team? Was there a sense that Twitter was on a war footing? It does not
23 seem like that was the case the night beforehand, since it was a regularly scheduled
24 meeting. But wanted to know what the team looked like on the 6th.

25 A Yeah. So I will say, I have very specific memories of, I don't think I slept

1 that night, and when I got up, I remember pacing the floor -- I lived in New York City, so I
2 lived in a tiny apartment. And I remember pacing the, like, 10 steps back and forth and
3 back and forth before I got online. Because I knew that whatever was ever gonna
4 happen that day was not going to be good, and I believed that people were going to die,
5 and it was just a matter of time.

6 I was working in New York City, so I was on the East Coast. The United States
7 team, I believe, at that time was less than maybe six people -- five, six people. There
8 was the site policy manager, who, again, had been on the team for maybe a month and
9 had not yet been trained on any of the team's policies. There was another member of
10 the team who was pretty new. And so, that day, there were three of us, really, who had
11 the training and the knowledge and were kind of the front line when it came to this.

12 Q For example, on election day, how many folks were similarly situated? Was
13 it a bigger team?

14 A Yeah. So, on election day, I believe -- I don't -- I was not a part of this, but
15 it's my recollection that on election day there was what they called a war room, in which
16 people were sitting together or sitting in -- like, there was a Slack channel that people
17 could always go into, or a Google Meets room that people could go into, in which there
18 was a constant monitoring of what was happening.

19 That did not exist. So you've mentioned, like, was Twitter on some sort of war
20 footing? No. It was a -- I showed up and everybody was acting as if it was a regular
21 day and nothing was going on. And I knew that not to be true.

22 And it was very clear very quick that we had a problem on our hands. I think
23 we've talked a little bit and I can talk in a second about, you know, when I signed online,
24 seeing that coded incitement had been used to permanently suspend someone. And so,
25 starting off on that footing, I knew the day was going to be unlike any that I had had.

1 Q Yeah. If we could touch on that next?

2 A Yeah.

3 Q So, last session, you told us that your supervisor -- when you came online,
4 you saw that your supervisor had suspended someone using coded incitement to
5 violence --

6 A Yes.

7 Q -- which, as you've talked about a lot about today, did not exist as a final
8 policy, correct?

9 A Yes.

10 Q So did you speak to your supervisor and ask them what was going on?

11 A Yes. So, again, this is the same supervisor who told me that we had no
12 coded incitement to violence policy, full stop.

13 And so, on January 6th, when I sign on to Slack and go into our team channel, I
14 saw a notification and kind of an explanation that there was a decision made by
15 leadership to permanently suspend this account. I want to say, in my brain, it's like
16 "@USAascension" or something like that.

17 But the account, to my assessment and to what -- I went and looked and assessed
18 and saw what we took down. To my account, it was absolutely in this realm of
19 counter-speech, right? It was satirical content, it was joke content, it was meme
20 content, and it was this parody. And it was something that I believed very much should
21 have stayed up. It was nowhere near as egregious as any of the information or any of
22 the tweets that we had looked at previously that we were not allowed to take down.

23 And so I was incredibly confused, one, not only that, you know, the policy existed
24 and we were allowed to use it, one, but, two, that we were permanently suspending
25 people under the policy. I don't think we've talked about this today, but the

1 recommendation for the coded incitement to violence policy was not a permanent
2 suspension.

3 So, the way that content moderation worked at Twitter, depending upon the
4 policy, you had what was called a strike count, and, within most policies, it was either
5 three strikes or two strikes.

6 On your first strike, you get what's called a tweet delete. You just have to delete
7 the tweet. There's no timeout. It's just kind of a warning, "Please don't do this."

8 The second time you violate that policy, you not only have to delete the tweet,
9 but you have to serve a 12-hour timeout. I believe it's 12 hours -- however long timeout
10 is.

11 And then, if you violate the third time, then you get permanently suspended.
12 And permanent suspension is the absolute strictest enforcement action that exists.
13 Within the content moderation space, it's essentially the equivalent of the death penalty,
14 right? You get it and you do not come back.

15 And so, for me, the usage of a permanent suspension or a deplatforming
16 mechanism is a last resort. And so, to see that being used as a first resort, specifically
17 when our team had recommended not only are we not going to have a strike count for
18 this, we're not going to issue any strikes, and we want people to just delete this
19 information -- because we had not in any way, shape, or form disclosed to the public that
20 this policy existed.

21 And so part of a desire for transparency, a desire for accountability within content
22 moderation systems at Twitter was to say out loud, we can't punish people for breaking
23 rules that they don't know exist, right? It's literally unfair.

24 And so our recommendation was, we need this policy in place because there is
25 going to be a problem, but because we don't have the time and the capabilities to make

- 1 this a public policy so that people know that it exists, what we will do is just force people
- 2 to delete the tweets. We won't give strikes. We won't permanently suspend people.
- 3 People will not be penalized. There was no penalty for coded incitement to violence.
- 4 It was just a tweet delete.

1

2 [4:48 p.m.]

3

BY [REDACTED]

4

5 Q So after all that, this policy was applied in a way that the rest of the Twitter
6 community was not aware of it and the rest of the team was not aware of it. So going
7 into the 6th, you didn't feel empowered to act on that policy because you weren't exactly
8 sure what had happened in the morning with your supervisor?

8

9 A Yes. And so I remember specifically sending a message and saying like,
10 Hey, I'm really confused about what's going on. This is contrary to what I've been told.
11 My assessment of the situation is that this -- even if we did have a coded incitement to
12 violence policy, this would not be a violation, and even if it was a violation, we shouldn't
13 be permanently suspending people.

14 And so I asked for clarity and asked my supervisor at the time the same question
15 that I had been asking for so long, what is the threshold? At what point are we able to
16 start taking down this content? Because to me, I was told the threshold was so up in the
17 sky you can't take it down anymore. And from what I saw, the threshold had been
18 moved literally to the floor in which we were taking down parity content.

19 And so, I asked my manager -- my manager mentioned there was going to be a
20 meeting later on in the day in which they were hoping to get some more clarity around
21 coded incitement. I asked if I could please be invited to the meeting/attend the
22 meeting, because I wanted and needed to know the information. I was not invited to
23 the meeting and was given the information afterwards about what happened.

24 Q So I want to get to that meeting in a moment, but more broadly, I wanted to
25 ask you about what you were seeing on the platform that day as things degenerated
throughout the morning and early afternoon. Was there a sense that the platform was

1 being used to direct movements of the crowd?

2 A Yeah. Yeah. That's a great question. I'm writing this down, movements
3 of the crowd. I will say, so I -- I didn't -- I wasn't watching the news. I was not like
4 tuned in to CNN watching the protests on the Capitol unfold. I watched the whole thing
5 happen on Twitter, from Twitter.com, working at Twitter. And so, I logged into the
6 platform and just started reading.

7 And so for me, it was very clear from the morning, starting in the very morning
8 and when individuals were -- were having a peaceful protest, that while there were
9 individuals there and gathered to exercise their right to assembly, and exercise their right
10 to protest their government, there was very much still this tenor in this language that was
11 beyond protest and was into incitement, right.

12 And so I continued to see this not -- not this like I'm going to D.C., but I'm in D.C.,
13 right. I am here, I'm -- I'm on the ground, I am locked and loaded, I'm ready for the "Day
14 of the Rope," right, so there was a reference to "The Turner Diaries." And seeing those
15 very specific references made me continue to believe that what we saw happening at the
16 beginning of the day would shift, and it would eventually turn into what it became.

17 And so, yes, throughout the day, I do remember seeing directions from crowd. I
18 remember seeing, you know, people posting, "Donald Trump has told us to march to the
19 Capitol," and that being an inflection point of, oh, this is really about to go down, because
20 this has moved from, you know, one place and we're literally moving to another, and then
21 hearing that someone had gotten shot, right, seeing videos and seeing images of
22 barricades being down, seeing images and videos of people going into the Capitol.

23 I will never forget the image of an individual carrying a Confederate flag through
24 the steps of the Capitol, seeing these things unfold in real time. Again, I watched it -- I
25 watched it -- this all happened in Twitter -- on Twitter in front of our faces.

1 Q What you mentioned about an inflection point when the President told
2 people to walk to the Capitol, at that point, you said you saw a lot more traffic on Twitter
3 basically confirming that they were going to go to the Capitol?

4 A Yes. Yes. Yes. And, again, it was like -- it was like be -- being a part of
5 the crowd was -- you were -- if you were on Twitter, you felt like you were a part of the
6 crowd because you could see what people were talking about, where their movements
7 were. And you saw people go from saying, I'm attending this rally, we've had some
8 people talk, to we are now on the move and this is where we're going.

9 Q And so was there discussion of particular breach points, We are at the West
10 Front, We're at the -- We're on the south side of the Capitol, that sort of thing?

11 A Yes. Yes, there was. And I -- and later on in the day, I remember taking
12 down some of those posts, so doing what we called a bounce, so a forced tweet delete,
13 after being able to write and implement the coded incitement to violence policy, looking
14 and seeing information like the existence of breaches or directional material. I felt as
15 if -- I felt as if I was in the Capitol watching from above, removing information and clicking
16 on it and literally trying to protect this physical space through this digital medium.

17 Q And I want to get back to the shift in coded incitement in a second, but on
18 this topic, did you ever see tweets about weapons, whether guns or otherwise, knives?

19 A Yes. I mean, again, it was -- it was full-blown locked and loaded. I think
20 I -- if I remember correctly, people were talking about what types of weapons they had,
21 right. So it was very clear that it wasn't like little guns, right, we were talking big guns
22 that were automatic and could do severe damage, in addition to pepper spray, knives, zip
23 ties, body armor, all of the -- all of the gear.

24 Q And so did you see tweets and exchanges of tweets about where there was
25 conflict with police and the kind of tactical strategy about how protesters were clashing

1 with police, or how rioters -- where rioters were moving to meet law enforcement or
2 where they were coming across law enforcement?

3 A I don't have any specific memories of that, but I don't doubt that it was
4 there.

5 Q It would've been in keeping with the sort of -- the caliber of violent content
6 that was on the platform at that time?

7 A Very much so.

8 Q What about targeting particular actors, like Speaker Pelosi, or Senator
9 Schumer, or Vice President Pence?

10 A Yes. So it became very clear, I don't know exactly at what point, I think it
11 was when folks began marching, that the former Vice President was a target. And I
12 believe this might have been the first time that I saw the gallows being constructed. I
13 saw -- again, I was not -- this has happening in real life --

14 Q Just pictures on Twitter?

15 A Yes, just pictures on Twitter of a gallow -- like gallows in front of the Capitol.
16 I think this was around the same time that "execute Mike Pence" started trending. And
17 so, seeing those things together, it was -- "disconcerting" is not the word I can use for it,
18 because, again, you have people who not just that day but days before had been
19 referencing the "Day of the Rope," which, again, it comes from White supremacist fan
20 fiction, and what I saw was that being enacted in reality, right, that there was literally a
21 rope being hung, and people were calling for mass executions in the exact way that this
22 propaganda had spelled it out.

23 And I recognized, this is a part of people's core belief system, right. Seeing this
24 thing happen -- part of the core belief system of QAnon is that the "Day of the Rope" will
25 occur. And so seeing it happen, it was like, Oh, this is not -- this is going to happen

1 because people are going to make it happen.

2 Q So there was obviously content on platforms like is QAnon -- or, sorry, like
3 8chan, the Donald.Win, Parler, where there have been well-publicized reports about
4 violent content. But what you're saying here is that there was content that you were
5 unable to prevent from popping up on Twitter --

6 A Yeah.

7 Q -- that was promoting the execution of Vice President Pence?

8 A Yes, literally hashtag "execute Mike Pence" was trending on Twitter.

9 Q And what would you have needed to prevent that from spreading?

10 A We should've had guidance in place. We should've had -- in like any other
11 situation in which we saw the potential for political violence, we -- we would've
12 anticipated and we would've written out, one of the risk is what if people start
13 calling -- calling or wishing harm upon individuals that happened to be there that day,
14 let's take this stuff down. And instead, again, we were going into it with this completely
15 hands-off approach.

16 Q And so essentially it was you and a few other -- two or three other
17 employees taking down these tweets one by one as they popped up?

18 A I -- I can speak for myself --

19 Q Sure.

20 A -- and I will say that I was. I definitely, after shipping the coded incitement
21 to violence guidance, I jumped into Profile Viewer myself and I started on -- also on
22 Twitter.com in the search function, I started inserting hashtags like hashtag "execute
23 Mike Pence," hashtag "locked and loaded," hashtag "stand back, stand by," hashtag "J6."
24 And then within -- on Twitter, I remember scrolling, if I saw something problematic, I
25 would grab the tweet ID, put it into Profile Viewer, and hit the bounce and cause a force

1 delete, go back to Twitter, keep scrolling, finding things, and I was doing that for a matter
2 of hours for a while there.

3 Q So I want to get back to the sort of core development of the day, which was
4 the shipping of the coded incitement policy. And this is the meeting that you were
5 referencing earlier that your supervisor went to that you were not invited to, correct?

6 A Yes.

7 Q So there was a meeting, is it late morning? Early afternoon?

8 A Morning, morning, early afternoon, maybe around noon, 1:30ish p.m. EST.

9 Q And I remember we talked about this in our last session, but you got orders
10 after that meeting. Can you refresh our memory as to those orders?

11 A Yes. I had two directives: One was to make the insurrection stop, and the
12 other was to find a way to permanently suspend former President Donald Trump.

13 Q And what was your response?

14 A I remember specifically saying to my manager, I would like to express my
15 frustration with you because I told you this was going to happen. You didn't listen to
16 me. Now it is happening and you are asking me to clean it up. And that was the task,
17 right. The task was to clean it up. And I remember saying that about January 6th.

18 And to the other directive of permanently suspending Donald Trump, I literally
19 said, for what? And my response was, he's not doing anything different than what he
20 has already done. I really need for you to help me understand why all of a
21 sudden -- there had never been a conversation, never an inkling, never anything in the
22 direction of permanently suspending Donald Trump, and now I'm being given the
23 directive to find a reason.

24 Q In fact, as we discussed last time and hope to discuss again soon, there was a
25 decidedly hands-off approach to the former President's account by Twitter leadership,

1 correct?

2 A Absolutely.

3 Q So this is a pretty sudden reversal to --

4 A Yes.

5 Q And do you remember where and when in the day you received these
6 orders? Was it before the Capitol had been breached?

7 A I believe -- I believe that someone had been shot by the time I received these
8 orders. And I -- if I were to estimate or assume the cause or reasoning behind the
9 directive, it was because someone had been shot.

10 Q Well, now would be a good time to actually return to exhibit 3, the
11 Twitter timeline.

12 Ms. Ronickher. Could we take a break?

13 [REDACTED] Sure.

14 Ms. Ronickher. Sorry. I just need a bio break.

15 [REDACTED] So we can take a break for 10 minutes. We can go off the record,
16 come back at 5:12.

17 [Recess.]

18 BY [REDACTED]

19 Q So we can go back on the record at 5:13.

20 And I wanted to return to the Twitter timeline at this point, exhibit 3, page 17.

21 And, again, it's page 17 at the bottom not the top. So this is, I think, related to what you
22 were just talking about was the directives you received to stop the insurrection and
23 permanently ban Donald Trump.

24 A Uh-huh.

25 Q At the second-to-last entry on page 17 is at 2:20 p.m., Twitter begins to

1 identify and review coded language that has the potential to incite violence.

2 A Uh-huh.

3 Q So we discussed this last time, but this is essentially a step you took to finally
4 operationalize the coded incitement to violence policy?

5 A Yes, it is.

6 Q And so you -- this was in response to the directives you received from your
7 supervisor who had been speaking with senior leadership?

8 A Yes, it is.

9 Q Okay. And just for the record, 2:20 p.m., assuming for argument's sake this
10 timeline is correct, that was before someone had been shot but right around the time
11 that the Capitol was breached. So that could also be the -- the sort of conflict ratio that
12 led to your orders?

13 A Yes.

14 Q Would that make sense?

15 A Yes. That does make sense, yes.

16 Q So how -- how did you go about operationalizing this policy and starting to
17 review tweets based on the coded language -- coded incitement policy after all that time?

18 A Yes. So after going into the meeting with my supervisor and one other
19 individual on January 6th, I asked my manager again, you know, what is the threshold
20 that we are using here for coded incitement? Because if you're asking me to clean this
21 up and make the insurrection stop, this is what -- the policy that we're going to need to
22 use.

23 Per usual, she was unable to give me an answer about what the threshold was.
24 This was infuriating, especially given, you know, I had specifically asked her that morning
25 after she permanently suspended the meme account to speak with our leadership team

1 to understand what the threshold was going to be and when we were going to be able to
2 take things down. She was ill-equipped and unable to do so, to the point in which I
3 remember specifically saying, you know, we need to know at what point we can take
4 things down.

5 And so I asked her, I'm going to give you a tweet. I need for you to help me
6 understand, is this a violation now or is it not a violation? And this is because this was
7 a -- I think this tweet was from Ali Alexander, so one of the leaders of the Stop the Steal
8 movement. And our team had assessed it. I believe it was, you know, one of these
9 "we're going to the Capitol" tweets.

10 Our team had previously assessed it. As we were told, under all of the policies
11 that existed, we found it to not be in violation because it was not something that we
12 could take action on. And it had been escalated to me again through other sources and
13 through other individuals in Twitter saying this is the type of content that we believe is
14 coded incitement and needs to come down.

15 And so, I went to my supervisor, and I remember copying and pasting a link to the
16 tweet, we all went on Twitter.com to go look at it, and saying to her, is this a violation or
17 is this not a violation? So a very simple question, a very -- it was literally a yes-or-no
18 question. And she shrugged her shoulders and did not give me an answer.

19 And recognizing, again, I am being given the directive to make this thing stop, I'm
20 asking, after being told and being not allowed to act, I'm now asking, okay, you're telling
21 me to act, but how, when, where, what are my constraints? I said to my manager, you
22 know, we -- we have to make decisions, right. You're literally asking me to do
23 something, we need to start making decisions.

24 And I said to her, I'm going to have to start making decisions now, and I am going
25 to decide that this is against our policy and that this is against coded incitement to

1 violence, and we are going to begin to err on the side of caution and begin removing
2 content that contains coded incitement to violence.

3 I believe she like nodded in agreement, and that was the beginning of me and a
4 couple of other individuals working to immediately spin up a -- another document that
5 was based very much on the original coded incitement to violence policy but was
6 enforcement guidance specifically about January 6th and how to deal with the content
7 that we were seeing on the platform that day.

8 Q So the origin of this revised coded incitement document that ended up being
9 shipped out to Twitter in a matter of hours, based on your recollection, that was -- the
10 prototypical example for this new policy was a tweet by Ali Alexander essentially telling
11 people to go to the Capitol?

12 A Yes.

13 Q And that was exactly the kind of content that you had hoped to be able to
14 take down preventatively --

15 A Yes. Yes.

16 Q So if there had been a coded incitement to violence in place on January 4th,
17 January 3rd, even January 6th at 5:00 in the morning, you would've been able to take
18 down that Ali Alexander tweet as soon as it popped up?

19 A Yes.

20 Q Do you think that would've made a difference for the rest of the content you
21 were seeing on Twitter?

22 A Yes. Yes. I say that because, again, I think you all have done this in your
23 work in showing, you know, there were outsized influencers and voices that were a part
24 of coordinating, organizing, ramping up the crowd on January 6th.

25 And I think one of the -- one of the really important parts of January 6th is the

1 symbiotic relationship that those actors, including former President Donald Trump, had
2 with Twitter, right, and recognizing that the -- one of the tools within their toolbox in
3 order to instigate this insurrection was their tweets, and how even within Twitter itself,
4 the same individuals that keep popping up as being a part of this day were the same
5 individuals that we were having to assess, that we were having to look at.

6 And so, it is definitely my belief that if we would've had a policy in place, the
7 influence and the -- the megaphone that was given to these individuals would not have
8 been as strong, right, because we would've been able to tamper down the conversation.
9 The tweet that I have been referencing with Ali Alexander, I believe it was on the service
10 for hours before we ever took it down, right. And so the impact would have been
11 different and it would have been -- I can't say what it would have been, but I know that it
12 would've been different.

13 Q So when you're talking about these outsized influencers, these are
14 individuals whose accounts would've included a lot of these replies that -- retweets that
15 had the "locked and loaded" language or even more violent rhetoric than that?

16 A Yes. Some of those individuals were either engaging in that language
17 themselves or were engaging in language that was very close to it, in which the people
18 that were responding to their tweets were using that very coded "locked and loaded,
19 stand back, stand by, civil war" language.

20 So, for instance, I believe like the Ali Alexander tweet that was like we're going to
21 the Capitol, people were like, hashtag we're going to the Capitol because we're definitely
22 locked and loaded and ready to go, right. And so it was -- it was that sort of -- again, as
23 Candyce said, call-and-response.

24 Q I know this is off the top of your head, but do you remember other individual
25 accounts that were active in the way that Ali Alexander's was on January 6th and the days

1 before?

2 A Again, I remember -- I remember his account. I remember the Code
3 Monkey account, whichever Watkins -- I'm sorry, you told me which one.

4 Q Ron.

5 A Ron.

6 Q Yeah.

7 A Ron Watkins' account. I think I mentioned last time Madison Cawthorn. I
8 think we -- I remember seeing the image of Josh Hawley with his fist up that day. And I
9 can't -- I can't say that I really remember anyone else in particular, but I do remember
10 there was just a general ethos of people that existed within this space, and January 6th
11 was like -- it was their day to shine.

12 Q And do you believe there was a general desire to have a hands-off approach
13 with some of those accounts similar to the hands-off approach to Donald Trump's
14 account, or even perhaps because of their proximity to Donald Trump's account?

15 A Yes, very much so. I believe it was -- it was the same sort of hands-off
16 approach, and I think it was because of the proximity to Donald Trump, and, again, I think
17 we talked about this last time, the desire to not want to be seen as being politically
18 biased.

19 Q Thank you.

20 So I wanted to get back to the day of the 6th itself. And you -- around 2:00, 2:30,
21 you had the opportunity to finally start using the coded incitement policy, and you were
22 therefore taking down tweets that were either on the verge of violent or pretty violent.
23 As the day progressed, what was the most concerning content you saw on the platform?
24 We already discussed this a little bit, but if you had any other recollections.

25 A Yeah. Again, the most concerning content to me was the -- was kind of the

1 directional coordination activity, so the go here, go there, this barricade is down, this
2 door is open, that sort of information. And I -- the day, in and of itself, it's hard to like
3 remember very specific, in particular, tweets, because, again, I was sitting there for a very
4 long time bouncing.

5 But I do remember seeing that language, and, again -- I felt as if I was like a Capitol
6 security guard, like, watching over the place, trying to -- I was following the movements of
7 what had become rioters and hoping against hope that there would be -- there wouldn't
8 be some sort of violent clash along the way and hoping to help protect American
9 democracy.

10 Q So you're talking about this image of you being a sort of digital security
11 guard a couple of times now, and I'm wondering, just how specific were the instructions
12 that were being tweeted out? Were they talking about the House Chamber being
13 surrounded, or the Senate Chamber being breached, the Speaker's offices? What were
14 you seeing?

15 A I think it was all of the above, right. It was every single thing that we saw
16 happening was tweeted about. And I -- I think -- my memory of this is very much, you
17 know, in the days leading after was the first time that I actually saw footage on like a
18 news site of what had happened on January 6th, and I was able to kind of put together
19 the full picture and see, even watching your hearings and being like, oh, that's what
20 happened?

21 But it was very much -- it was -- it's like live tweeting a TV show, right.
22 Everything that's happening in front of me, you see it happening in words. It was the
23 exact same thing that was happening but it was January 6th, and so it was -- the event
24 was live-tweeted. Every barricade that was broken, every room that was occupied,
25 everything that happened, somebody was tweeting about it occurring.

1 Q And to be clear, this is participants, rioters, not journalists saying here's
2 what's happening now?

3 A Yes, this was individuals, who themselves were participating in the
4 insurrection, giving a play-by-play to the rest of the world of what was happening inside
5 of the building.

6 Q And it seems like Twitter was unable to muster the resources to shut that
7 down entirely? Was there a way to do that?

8 A I -- yes, there would've been a way. So if we would've had the resources at
9 our disposal, if we would've already shipped the coded incitement to violence policy, we
10 would've had what was called a resource request already on the books, which would've
11 meant there would've been specific -- there would've been a group of people whose
12 entire job it was for that day to specifically monitor that content and take it down
13 immediately. But that was never stood up, and that was never created, and so rather
14 than be able to monitor in real time with a significant amount of people who would be
15 able to make a dent in it, it was literally me and maybe a couple of other people for a
16 couple of hours.

17 Because I think I've mentioned this, but in shipping a policy, in shipping the coded
18 incitement to violence policy it was -- you know, it's an email that gets sent around the
19 world, but it takes time, right. It takes time for people to read a several-page document,
20 to understand what we're talking about, to then go and tell, you know -- get the teams
21 together, get -- pull them off of other queues and pull them onto this resource and then
22 have them essentially be trained and ready to go to be able to do this.

23 Like that -- while we might have started creating the guidance at 2:00, you know,
24 it takes about 2 hours to write guidance and then you ship it, it takes at least another
25 hour or 2 for it to begin to be implemented, so we're talking, like, 4 hours of the

1 insurrection just being allowed to flame.

2 Q So you had been warning Del Harvey, at least from November 9th onward,
3 that there was this kind of content circulating on Twitter talking about civil unrest,
4 correct?

5 A Yes.

6 Q And you had been speaking internally as a team since at least
7 December 19th about the foreknowledge that this civil unrest discussion was now
8 targeted at January 6th, correct?

9 A Yes.

10 Q And by December 29th, you had been speaking with members of other
11 teams about the lack of a coordinated response by Twitter, right?

12 A Yes.

13 Q And you took a step of warning the de facto supervisor the day before
14 January 6th that there needed to be a more robust response, right?

15 A Yes.

16 Q And on the morning of, you were requesting additional guidance on coded
17 incitement and trying to get some sort of clarity on how you could take down content
18 that was coming your way the day of the event?

19 A Yes.

20 Q But it took until the actual live tweeting of a successful breach of the Capitol
21 for your superiors at Twitter to essentially tell you to do what you've been saying and
22 asking and begging to do for over a month at that point?

23 A Yes, that's correct.

24 Q So, thank you. I wanted to move to an entry in the timeline that's still on
25 page 18, second-to-last entry again -- or, no, my apology -- my apologies. The last entry

1 at around 5:00 p.m. on January 6th. There's an entry that says that safety policy
2 circulates additional guidance to minimize content with the propensity to incite violence.
3 I just want to be clear for the record, is this the finalization of the policy you start creating
4 at 2:20-ish?

5 A Yes, that's exactly what it is. I think, you know, I just mentioned it takes
6 about 2 hours to --

7 Q Right.

8 A -- turn around and write that. This is exactly that sort of timeline of around
9 2:00 we opened a Google document, around 5:00 p.m. the Google document was ready
10 to go, and we sent it to, you know -- we sent it for approval and then we sent it out to be
11 enforced upon.

12 Q So this framing, again, while technically correct, omits a lot of the context
13 that is what we've been talking about, this policy existed for 2 months at this point, and
14 you had been urging it to be enacted long before 5:00 p.m. on the day of the
15 insurrection?

16 A Yes, very much so.

17 Q What -- obviously, by 5:00 p.m., the worst of the attack was over, so what
18 effect did the belated enactment of the coded incitement policy actually have on the
19 course of events that day?

20 A There was a video that circulated on Twitter and on social media that day
21 where you saw staff from the Capitol sweeping up glass and essentially, you know,
22 scrubbing off paint, all of these things. I remember seeing that video and feeling
23 camaraderie with those folks, because I felt like our job was very much the same. We
24 came in at the end of the day, at the end of the carnage, at the end of the destruction
25 with brooms and were tasked with essentially trying to sweep away what had happened.

1 And so what the impact of it was, you know, we were able to remove tweets that
2 had been up. You know, when I was -- when I was removing tweets, I was removing
3 tweets that had been up for months, and so we were able to finally take some of that
4 content down, but again, it happened after the fact, right.

5 And so it was -- it -- I remember, I talked to Del Harvey on January 6th as well and
6 said the exact same thing to her of I want to express my frustration to you about the fact
7 that I told you this was going to happen, and you didn't listen and now here we are, and it
8 really felt like the only thing that we could do was try and clean up the mess that she had
9 made.

10 Q What time did you speak to Del Harvey?

11 A Sometime before 5:00, so maybe around 2:00, 3:00 EST.

12 Q And do you remember what she said to you on the call?

13 A I don't believe that her or my supervisor were responsive to me expressing
14 my frustration. It seemed more as if I was being a nuisance to them and/or bringing up
15 something they very much did not want to talk about rather than continuing in this sort
16 of absurdist approach of looking at this moment as ahistorical and not wanting to
17 recognize Twitter's responsibility within it.

18 Q And yet, you said later in the day you were deleting posts from months
19 before --

20 A Yes.

21 Q -- that were essentially the seeds of --

22 A Yes.

23 Q -- the same kind of posts you saw on the 6th?

24 A Yes, very much so.

25 Q What about the other instruction you received in the early afternoon --

1 A Yeah.

2 Q -- about removing President Trump from the platform, was there action on
3 that during those few hours between, you know, noon and 5:00 p.m.?

4 A Yeah. Yes, and -- so I wanted to actually back up to page 17 on this.

5 Q Sure.

6 A And I think, looking at January 6th tweets, if I remember correctly, there was
7 a concern within Twitter, and I remember it was from Vijaya specifically around the
8 language that President Trump was using towards Mike Pence, and so I think that was
9 also an inflection point. So there was a -- the Capitol has been breached and it seems
10 like Donald Trump might be going after and/or endangering Mike Pence. And so, I think
11 that played into the directive to permanently suspend the President.

12 So I was not involved in the additional conversations that happened that led to the
13 subsequent timeout and the tweet delete that was required by President Trump come
14 the end of January 6th, and what I was involved in was the very beginning of the
15 conversation. So after being given the directive to permanently suspend and me saying,
16 you know, for what, it then was left to me to kind of create the argument for why.

17 Q But that was -- if I recall it correctly, that was the next day or the day after on
18 January 8th, or that's January 6th?

19 A January 6th.

20 Q Okay. Okay. Go ahead.

21 A Yes. So -- yes, there -- yes, on January 6th. I -- I had another colleague
22 who was another senior member of the team at the time and so we divided the work. I
23 went to go deal with the insurrection, and she was given the task to go work on the
24 permanent suspension. But, again, prior to that, we had no reasoning or basis.

25 And so I -- I remember sitting there furiously writing with my pen trying to think of

1 a policy justification or understanding for why we should do that. I came up with an
2 argument that the former President's tweets were no longer in the public interest, and
3 because of that, should be removed and he should be removed from the platform.

4 I can give a little background about like why I came up with that, but I gave that
5 argument to a teammate and told them to run with it. How the conversations
6 progressed from there, I was not in those meetings and that teammate never relayed
7 back to the team what happened or why.

8 Q So I see here on page 17, there's a tweet at 2:24 which then was delete
9 4 minutes later -- or, sorry, labeled 4 minutes later and restricting engagements with the
10 tweet. So that's what you're identifying as potentially an accelerant in Twitter
11 leadership's desire to deal with President Trump's account in a more aggressive way?

12 A I wasn't involved with that decision, but, again, I would think so, right. So
13 that sort of speed was kind of unheard of, and, again, I do know that Vijaya had very
14 specific concerns -- yeah, this was one of the tweets that I know Vijaya had very specific
15 concerns about because -- I don't -- I don't know if Mike Pence's office got in touch with
16 Twitter, like that would not be unusual. I don't know that. But some -- there was
17 some sort of conversation that occurred in which there became a concern. And so, it
18 does make sense that that -- that that tweet was labeled very quick and fast because I
19 know it was of specific concern.

20 Q And you were also seeing content on the platform at that time that was
21 threatening towards the Vice President hashtag --

22 A Yes.

23 Q -- "execute Mike Pence"?

24 A They were literally calling for his execution.

25 Q As this tweet was going out?

1 A Yes, and after, in response to this tweet too, because I think as many of -- as
2 many of Donald Trump's tweets did, it, again, fanned the flames. And it was individuals
3 who were already constructing gallows, who were already willing and able and wanting to
4 execute someone and looking for someone to be killed, now the individual who has called
5 upon them to begin this coup is now pointing the finger at another individual while
6 they're ready to do this.

7 Q So it does not seem like Twitter leadership had a clear idea of what they
8 wanted to happen with President Trump's account while the attack was unfolding. Is
9 that fair?

10 A There was -- there was no clarity. There was no plan. There was no
11 clarity.

12 Q Had there ever been any explicit discussion with Del Harvey or folks even
13 above Del Harvey about the potential to suspend or take action against President Trump's
14 account in the past?

15 A Not to my knowledge. Again, this -- come January 6th, the directive to find
16 a way to permanently suspend Donald Trump for me came out of left field because there
17 had never been -- there had never been a conversation. And it was very -- it was also
18 very confusing, because to me it was clear where this was going, and it seemed as if
19 Twitter wanted to continue this willful blindness of we understand that this individual is
20 towing the line, potentially crossing the line, but there was never an anticipation or a plan
21 or anything put in advance proactively to think about what should or could happen if and
22 when the time came in which Donald Trump needed to be permanently suspended.

23 Q So that came out of left field, but you had raised concerns about the
24 President's account before. We discussed the "looting starts, shooting starts"
25 comment --

1 A Yes.

2 Q -- which was in May of 2020?

3 A Yes. Yes.

4 Q But that was to institute a warning on one of the President's tweets, right?

5 A Yes. Yes. So that -- that tweet that was labeled with -- again was called
6 the public interest interstitial, so this is going back to kind of -- I'm going to talk a little bit
7 about kind of the general treatment of Donald Trump. And so there was a very long
8 time in which there was no interventions whatsoever before the public interest
9 interstitial was created in which Twitter's public stance was whatever Donald Trump says
10 is okay, and we're going to allow it to stay because of who he is and because we believe
11 that the information that he is saying is in the public interest.

12 There was a time then in which the public interest interstitial was created on my
13 team. There was a lot of -- there's a lot of public information about kind of the
14 philosophical stance that Twitter was taking at that time in saying we believe, you know,
15 that this is a communications platform -- they would never say it was a communications
16 platform, but we believe that this is a method and manner of communication between
17 a -- you know, a governing body and their constituents, and we believe that it's important
18 for individuals to hear what, you know, their government has to say, and using this sort of
19 idea of public interest within, you know, free expression jurisprudence deciding that
20 if -- certain individuals, I believe the criteria was 100,000 followers, verified, you know,
21 government official, if this information or content is coming from these specific
22 individuals, the company believed that the harm that could happen from that language
23 would be outweighed by its unique place within the public interest, and so it needed to
24 stay.

25 And so what was created then was this tombstone called the public interest

1 interstitial and --

2 Q Could you just explain for the record "tombstone"?

3 A Yes, I can. So it was a label, we called them interstitials. It is basically like
4 a bunch of words. It's like a small paragraph that we would adhere to a tweet, and it
5 would say this tweet has been found in violation of Twitter's policies against whatever the
6 case may be. We have determined that this tweet should remain in the public interest
7 and so we are leaving it up.

8 But what the public interest interstitial actually did and why I call it a tombstone is
9 because it limited engagement. So people could not like the tweet, people could not
10 retweet the tweet, people could not quote tweet the tweet. It essentially was dead. It
11 was just there. And so, that sort of -- that sort of creation of the public interest
12 interstitial created guardrails that had never existed before.

13 Q And just to clarify, was that created essentially to deal with some of what
14 Donald Trump was tweeting in the summer of 2020?

15 A So the public interest interstitial was created before then.

16 Q Okay.

17 A It was created -- I believe it was launched in 2019, but it was very much a
18 response of world leaders and individuals like Donald Trump are saying things that may
19 not be okay, and this approach of doing absolutely nothing isn't working so maybe we
20 should try something else, and that approach was the interstitial.

21 Q And you were not intimately involved in creating that, right?

22 A I was not. My team was, and this -- most of this happened before my time.
23 I joined -- at the time that I joined the interstitial was in the works, and it was launched
24 and created after I joined.

25 Q So Donald Trump may have had something to do with it, but it was not as

1 clear-cut a case as, for example, the coded incitement "stand back, stand by"?

2 A Yes.

3 Q Okay. So from this same timeline that we're talking about, there had been
4 three Trump tweets that were bounced by 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time, after you had been
5 cleaning up the carnage. But at that point you had been out of many of the
6 conversations that were going on about what to do with the President's account, correct?

7 A Yes.

8 Q So what was your view, sort of, signing off that night about what was going
9 to happen with his account come the morning and when his timeout expired the next
10 day?

11 A There was no plan in place.

12 Q Okay.

13 A You would think that after having gone through a process of almost
14 permanently deleting or permanently banning and suspending the President that come
15 January 7th when he was in a timeout, we would've had some sort of team discussion
16 about, you know, how to proceed if and when he returned to the platform and there was
17 a violation. Not only would you think that happened, but I -- I -- my memory is saying
18 that there was a warning that was given to the former President, Donald Trump, that if he
19 returned and continued to do the same thing, he would be permanently suspended.

20 And so there was this acknowledgment that it could happen, but there was
21 no -- there was no plan. There was no structure. There was no conversation. It was
22 this, sort of, maybe it will happen, and if it does, we'll figure it out, versus a understanding
23 of, We are going into what can and will be the most historic and biggest decision that has
24 ever been made within the history of content moderation, and we need to be prepared to
25 be able to defend this decision or move forward in some sort of a way. But that didn't

1 exist.

2 Q So when you said there was a warning given to the former President, at the
3 time sitting President, what do you mean by that? Was it sent to his account? Was
4 there some kind of -- are you aware of some kind of communication between the
5 White House and Twitter?

6 A I do not remember exactly how the warning was relayed. I -- if I remember
7 correctly, I believe it might have even been included within the public comms that went
8 out that said, you know, we have decided to force the deletion of these tweets and put
9 President Donald Trump within a timeout, and if he continues along this course of action,
10 we will consider permanent suspension, I believe.

11 Q Thank you. So at this point, I do want to move on to sort of what happened
12 on the 7th and 8th, but first I wanted to ask if anyone had any questions? No? All
13 right. So we can keep going. I just wanted to ask.

14 So in our last session we talked a lot about the general process that resulted in the
15 President's permanent suspension on January 8th, but I wanted to focus now on the parts
16 that you were most involved in, which I believe were sort of the analysis of what was
17 going on in response to the President's tweets on the 7th and 8th, or on the 8th.

18 A Uh-huh.

19 Q So can you tell us what happened on January 7th? You were just talking
20 about a little bit that there was no organized game plan for what happened when the
21 President was going to be allowed back on Twitter. What was your involvement in
22 those discussions in the interim while he was off the platform?

23 A Yeah. So I actually had a meeting with Del Harvey on January 7th,
24 specifically to talk about the mismanagement of our team. I believe -- I believe we had
25 put this on the calendar in advance, but I spent at least an hour of time on the phone with

1 Del Harvey on January 7th walking through what I saw to be as momentous errors that
2 occurred on January 6th and leading up to January 6th, specifically around my manager
3 and her inability to grasp the policies that we worked with, the nuances of those policies,
4 to be able to articulate where a threshold would exist.

5 I remember telling Del Harvey about my manager shrugging her shoulders at me
6 and having a sort of conversation of saying this was something that happened that was
7 very important and it was a miss. We missed. We absolutely did not handle this in the
8 correction way, and it did not have to happen like this.

9 And I remember saying all of this to Del Harvey in the hopes that she would step in
10 or maybe do something or care about the chaos that was happening and it kind of had
11 ensued our team. But we did not have -- I don't believe we had any sort of specific
12 conversation about the permanent suspension or anticipation of what might occur. I
13 mean, we didn't even have like alerts for when Donald Trump was going to tweet, like it
14 was very hands-in-the-air, we'll figure it out, maybe.

15 Q Could I ask, you have been working at Twitter since mid-2019, and you said
16 that when you came on board there was already a public -- an interest warning essentially
17 about the -- that incorporated some of the concerns around the President. When was
18 the first time you told Twitter we have a more systemic problem with the former
19 President's account? Was there a moment when you sounded the alarm? Was it in
20 the context of the summer or was it coded incitement?

21 A That's a great question. I think the first time that we began to raise the
22 alarm was in the tweets that we talked about previously directed towards The Squad. I
23 think that was the first time in which our team, again, had taken the position that this is a
24 violation and that this is a problem.

25 Actually articulating that what the former President had been saying and was

1 continuing to say was not only problematic, but was unconstitutional and illegal, those
2 conversations did not occur until January 8th when I was in conversation with Del Harvey
3 specifically about why we needed to permanently suspend the former President.

4 Q So in July 2019, that was when the President, which was shortly after you
5 arrived to Twitter, that's when the President was tweeting about The Squad and asked
6 them to go back to their -- telling them to go back to their home countries. So that
7 would've been the first point where you sounded the alarm about Twitter's treatment of
8 the account, but the first time you heard any conversation about permanent suspension
9 would've been on January 6th and discussion of it really only occurred in the days
10 afterwards?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Okay.

13 A That's very accurate.

14 Q That's very helpful. So I wanted to turn to exhibit 6, page 12, which I
15 believe goes into what was happening on January 8th?

16 A Yes.

17 Q So that call with Del Harvey about -- that touched on the Trump account did
18 not end with any specific course of action on January 7th, correct?

19 A Yes. My conversation with Del on December 7th was unfruitful.

1

2 [5:57 p.m.]

3

BY [REDACTED]

4

Q January 7th.

5

A Thank you. January 7th.

6

Q We're getting into hour 4 now, so.

7

And so I wanted to walk again through the meetings that your team had with

8

Twitter leadership and others regarding the future of Trump's account.

9

A Uh-huh.

10

Q You told us last time that you'd gotten a significant amount of outreach from

11

others at Twitter asking you to analyze the President's tweets.

12

A Uh-huh.

13

Q What can you tell us, like, the morning of January 8th, about Twitter

14

leadership's mindset regarding the President's account at that time?

15

A To my understanding and knowledge, it remained the same, right? It was

16

this same sort of -- I mean, Del essentially articulated later in the day it was a

17

wait-and-see approach, right? We're just gonna sit by, see what happens, and then

18

maybe do something. There was no plan, no proactive assessment, nothing in place in

19

anticipation that a permanent suspension could and was likely to happen on

20

January 8th -- going into January 8th.

21

Q So it was your continued sense that Twitter leadership was caught off guard

22

by the fact the President was continuing to use the platform in the same way that he had

23

before his timeout?

24

A It seemed to be that way, yes.

25

Q And so one tweet that is discussed in this document is the -- it's still on

1 page 12 -- it's the one that begins with a mention of "75 million great American patriots."

2 A Uh-huh.

3 Q Based on the assessment at the bottom of this page, it seems like you did
4 not view this tweet as coded incitement, which, again, would've been operationalized a
5 couple days before, so you could have applied that policy, correct?

6 A Technically, yes --

7 Q Okay.

8 A -- we could have applied that policy. And I think it would've been a very
9 hard argument to try and apply a nonpublic policy that had just been launched the day
10 before to the highest-profile account.

11 Q So you did not think that it violated any other previously existing public
12 policies at that point. So I'm wondering if you could kind of walk us through why this
13 tweet in particular did not seem to you to be worthy of certainly suspension.

14 A Yeah. So the tweet eventually I did argue and made the recommendation
15 was worthy of suspension.

16 Q Uh-huh.

17 A The first assessment that we took a look at and we used was underneath our
18 policies for abusive behaviors and hateful conduct. So those are very specific policies
19 within our team's purview. I remember assessing to understand whether or not we
20 thought that the tweet might be inciting fear towards a protected category, right? That
21 is a very classic hateful-conduct violation.

22 I think you see at the top of page 13 here we say, "The tweet does not violate our
23 hateful conduct policy's prohibition against inciting fear because no protected category is
24 targeted in the tweet," which is a requirement to take action. So we did not have what
25 was required in order for us to find a violation underneath that policy.

1 After that assessment was made -- that was the first assessment -- we continued
2 to have a conversation about those tweets, how they were landing in the world, what the
3 response was to them, and whether and how we should continue to evaluate the tweets
4 under another policy.

5 Q So it seems like what tipped your team in favor of a recommendation to
6 suspend President Trump permanently was the response to this "75 million great
7 patriots" tweet as well as the subsequent tweet regarding his decision not to attend the
8 inauguration of Joe Biden.

9 A Yes.

10 Q And so I'm curious to hear more about the kinds of content you were seeing
11 that was concerning as these tweets went out into the world. Was it similar to what you
12 saw on December 19th or even on January 5th and 6th?

13 A Yeah, it was the exact same language and rhetoric that we saw on
14 January 5th, on January 6th, and even leading into January 9th.

15 So I will say, we began assessing the tweet under another policy, so not under our
16 hateful conduct policy, but what was called the GOV, our glorification of violence policy.
17 And so we began viewing this not in the light of, "Maybe this is again inciting fear towards
18 a protected category," but, "Is this tweet either condoning or glorifying or creating more
19 incitement towards the violence that had already occurred in the days previously?"

20 And so, under that sort of assessment, we began looking to see, again, the kind of
21 call and response or the echo chamber in which these tweets were landing.

22 And so we saw that the tweet that Donald Trump tweeted about not attending
23 the inauguration was very much met with the same sort of rhetoric as when Donald
24 Trump announced that he was not conceding, right? So it was the same sort of
25 continuation of him announcing that he had not lost the election, he was not going to

1 give up, and, no matter what happened, he was going to not attend this peaceful
2 transition of power, which was very disturbing.

3 The second thing that was incredibly disturbing is what we saw happening and
4 planning for what I believe could have been and would have been a second insurrection
5 attempt on January 17th. So what we saw was people responding to this tweet around
6 "American patriots," saying, you know, "I'm locked and loaded, I'm ready to go again,"
7 and instead of hashtag "J6," it was hashtag "J17."

8 So what was more concerning to me, not just seeing these tweets, was, this was
9 being planned not just for the United States Capitol but for capitols around the country
10 and at every single State. And to my vision and to what I saw occurring, we would have
11 had on January 17th another insurrection attempt that would have been larger, at a
12 grander scale, and happened all over the country.

13 I think what also happened is we saw individuals who had not been able to
14 participate in January 6th who were now being stoked to participate in political violence
15 on January 17th, so individuals saying, "I missed it the first time. I'll be there. I'm
16 locked and loaded. #J17."

17 And so, seeing those sort of responses, it became very clear to me that, without
18 intervention, the exact same playbook that happened from December 19th to January 6th
19 was going to occur from January 8th to January 17th.

20 Q And so January 6th was not viewed as a defeat, based on the traffic you
21 were seeing on the platform?

22 A No. It was seen as a glorious occasion. You know, people were upset
23 that, you know, former Vice President Mike Pence, you know, acquiesced and that the
24 process continued. And it also felt as if it didn't matter, right? As if this thing had
25 happened, but the call for the violent overthrow of the government, and specifically this

1 new government that had just been called and announced into being, was going to take
2 place on January 17th.

3 Q And you saw those kinds of tweets responding to what President Trump was
4 tweeting about the inauguration and about 75 million patriots.

5 A Yes, absolutely.

6 Q Just like before January 6th.

7 A It was the exact same rhetoric, to the point in which I remember having the
8 same sort of confusion but also anticipation and worry.

9 Q So, when you drafted another assessment on President Trump's account,
10 this was premised on the idea that he should be permanently suspended because of the
11 risk of ongoing violence?

12 A Yes. Yes. It was very much a -- it was no longer a, "We can take these
13 tweets at their face value within isolation and make a determination." And, instead, my
14 argument was, "We have to see this language as both a continuation and a culmination of
15 the events that we saw happening 2 days ago. And if we see it that way, we recognize
16 violence will happen again if we don't stop it."

17 Q And the specific justification you used in that policy recommendation was
18 the glorification of violence policy that Twitter had, correct?

19 A Yes, it was.

20 Q And that was typically used to prevent leaders from encouraging civil unrest.
21 Is that right?

22 A It was often used for that reason. It was also -- one of the other many
23 cases in which it was often used was in mass-casualty events. And so we would see
24 after mass shootings individuals going onto Twitter to say things like, you know, they
25 deserved it, or so-and-so, whoever the shooter was, is my hero, or this person should be a

1 martyr, or along those lines of, again, taking violence that had occurred and not only
2 condoning it but creating this kind of iconography around it.

3 Q So you were seeing similar patterns in the responses to President Trump's
4 tweets as responses to tweets praising mass-casualty events?

5 A Absolutely, yes.

6 Q So, at that point, you were the most senior tenured person on the U.S. safety
7 policy team, and you made this recommendation, and you believed that President Trump
8 needed to be permanently removed from Twitter.

9 A Yes.

10 Q What did you think was the biggest obstacle from making that a reality?

11 A Twitter leadership.

12 Q And why was that?

13 A There was not an appetite to do so. There seemed to still not be an
14 urgency around it.

15 And there was this continued reluctance to see the obvious and to understand or
16 to take accountability for the role in which Twitter played in January 6th, right? It was
17 clear that a crowd had been incited, and Twitter was refusing to acknowledge and/or see
18 its role as being the place in which that incitement occurred.

19 Q And so a big reason why you believed that Twitter leadership remained an
20 obstacle was because of your 2:00 p.m. meeting with Del Harvey, correct?

21 A On which day?

22 Q January 8th.

23 A On January 8th --

24 Ms. Ronickher. I'm just going to be -- you can answer that question, but don't go
25 into the content of that meeting.

1 The Witness. Of this meeting. Okay.

2 Do you mind -- I just found it on here. Do you mind repeating the question?

3 BY [REDACTED]

4 Q So I think we discussed this last time, that on January 8th you had a meeting
5 with Del Harvey and Yoel Roth to discuss your team's recommendation.

6 A Yes.

7 Q But --

8 Ms. Ronickher. I'm just -- yeah. I just want to make sure that no attorney-client
9 privilege is revealed in discussing it.

10 [REDACTED] No, no, no.

11 Ms. Ronickher. Sorry, I'm not remembering the specifics of --

12 [REDACTED] Don't want to go around that.

13 Ms. Ronickher. But I think she can speak about -- in response to the question
14 about why she believed after this meeting that leadership was --

15 [REDACTED] Sure.

16 BY [REDACTED]

17 Q So, I mean, I could reference, last time that we spoke, you essentially said
18 that Del Harvey expressed skepticism that President Trump was an ongoing threat.

19 A Yes.

20 Q And you told us that she was essentially adopting a wait-and-see approach --

21 A Yes.

22 Q -- to his account --

23 A Yes.

24 Q -- and told you to find more information.

25 A Yes.

1 Q So was that sort of part of why you believed Twitter leadership was an
2 obstacle to taking swift action on his account?

3 A Yes. And just the general tenor -- am I allowed to talk about the tenor of
4 the conversation, Del's tenor?

5 Ms. Ronickher. Uh-huh.

6 The Witness. Yeah.

7 Yes. When I joined -- I think I may have said this last time. When I joined that
8 meeting, I did not expect to join the sort of contentious conversation that I joined. And
9 it became very clear within a couple of minutes that I was in the middle of literally Twitter
10 v. Trump, right? And I was arguing on behalf of Twitter to executives that seemed to be
11 arguing on behalf of Trump.

12 And so it became very confusing, and, again, I felt as if I was on trial. And I
13 recognized very quickly that I needed to present my information, arrange my arguments
14 in such a way that they would have the impact to be able to break through the skepticism
15 that I was receiving.

16 Q And so you came out of that meeting, unexpectedly contentious, and Del
17 Harvey told you to collect more concrete examples of people coming to D.C. on
18 January 17th.

19 A Yes. So I don't think that Del Harvey believed me, right? And so I think I
20 said this to you last time, but it wasn't -- I made a lot of arguments to Del on that day, and
21 many of them were around her previous treatment of accounts. And I remember
22 specifically bringing up an account and saying, you know, Del -- at this time, I remember
23 she was able to literally read words into a tweet. And I remember the conversation with
24 her, and she was like, "This is what it was saying." And I said to her, "Yeah, that's what
25 it's saying if you read the words into it," right?

1 So we're talking about someone who in certain instances, when they wanted to,
2 had the ability to not only add context but to literally add words. But, in this situation, it
3 felt as if she was playing dumb to me --

4 Q Uh-huh.

5 A -- because she was not able to use those same skills and those same abilities
6 in this circumstance, and, instead, was saying, we can only read this at face value, we
7 can't read anything into it, we can't examine the sort of context of this.

8 And it was not until I said to Del -- in bringing up all of the arguments and saying,
9 this is going to happen again, they're planning for January 7th, I specifically said to Del,
10 "Del, do you want to have more blood on your hands?" And it was that moment in
11 which there was a light switch, and I saw her for a moment recognize that what happened
12 on January 6th very much was a Twitter liability.

13 And my challenge to her of saying, "Not only did this thing happen, but it's your
14 fault, there is blood on your hands, and if you do it again, you're gonna have more," it
15 seemed like that was the only argument that landed.

16 Q So then you went back to find more content relating to the 17th. And, as
17 we discussed, you had no problem finding very specific content, correct?

18 A It was readily available.

19 Q And you sent that over to Del and others?

20 A Yes, I did.

21 Q And at that point you had no more firsthand experience with what happened
22 with the President's account and you found out that it was suspended?

23 A Yes.

24 Q Okay.

25 And, to confirm, you don't believe that another account would've been subjected

1 to such a protracted debate if they had posted similar things and received similar replies?

2 A Yeah, there's no doubt in my mind that this treatment, the conversation,
3 everything about this was unique because of who it was.

4 Q Uh-huh. And I want to get to that a little bit more and touch on that again
5 in a moment, but I had a couple more questions on this point.

6 A Uh-huh.

7 Q First, to your knowledge, did Twitter management and leadership ever
8 discuss reversing the permanent ban on President Trump?

9 A Not to my knowledge. There was never a full-blown discussion of reversal.
10 There was a discussion to prioritize user rehabilitation.

11 Q Uh-huh, as we discussed last time.

12 A Uh-huh.

13 Q And I understand that President Trump tried to utilize several other accounts
14 following his permanent suspension on the 8th?

15 A Yes.

16 Q Can you describe your team's interaction with those accounts?

17 A Yeah. So there's two things I kind of want to talk about here, so I'm going
18 to go into one of them first, and I'm probably gonna ask you to repeat that question
19 again.

20 Just to say, it was very common at this time that whatever Donald Trump tweeted,
21 if it was found in violation, if it was not found in violation, people were going to repeat it,
22 right?

23 And so, when we decided that this was going to be, you know, a permanent
24 suspension and that content came down, we immediately saw, you know, bot accounts,
25 influencers, the entire Twitter platform tweeting the exact same language. And this

1 happened consistently. It was very often a challenge to people, or to Twitter itself, to
2 say, you know, "Donald Trump said this, and you didn't have a problem with it. What if I
3 say it?"

4 And so, at this point, we had encountered this so many times that we had a
5 process of essentially removing and taking down that sort of content if we had found it to
6 be in violation on, for instance, Donald Trump's account. So the "shooting and looting"
7 tweet, I believe, you know, we marked that as a violation with the public interest
8 interstitial, and I believe the White House account tweeted the exact same thing, right?
9 And so we had to go the White House account and we had to apply a public interest
10 interstitial to that.

11 So this sort of hopscotch of, like, "If Donald Trump said it, it might be a problem;
12 we're going to do it over here; we're going to do it over there," was very, very common.

13 And so, on January 8th, I do remember it seemed as if -- this might've happened
14 on January 6th as well, but -- it seemed as if Donald Trump lost his access to Twitter on
15 his phone and he ran to Dan Scavino's phone and began and continued to keep tweeting.

16 And so I remember seeing those tweets and having conversations about what we
17 called "ban evasion." So, at Twitter and many companies, social media companies, ban
18 evasion is exactly what it sounds like. It is a policy that says, once you are permanently
19 suspended and/or banned from the platform, you may not evade that ban by either
20 creating a new account or using somebody else's account or doing all of these other
21 things.

22 And so, underneath the policy of ban evasion, I believe we took down tweets from
23 Dan Scavino and from the White House account and from additional accounts that day
24 that continued to post either Donald Trump himself or the same language that he had
25 used previously.

1 Q And you said you had two things you wanted to say about it. Were they --

2 A I think I answered it.

3 Q Okay. I thought you did, but I wasn't sure.

4 A Sorry. I appreciate you.

5 Q So one last question on this: There were other dramatic actions Twitter
6 took after the 6th, one of which was, by January 12th, Twitter had suspended over 70,000
7 accounts related to QAnon.

8 And I'm wondering why that had not been done sooner. We talked about this
9 briefly on the first session. But do you have a sense about why, if Twitter had the
10 capacity to track QAnon accounts --

11 A Yeah. Yeah. I think this goes to a kind of trend that I saw at Twitter.
12 And I think part of -- you asked me why I left Twitter, and one of the things that I
13 remember saying to my direct supervisor was, "I am sick of people needing to die in order
14 for us to prioritize work." And that was kind of the calling card for Twitter.

15 And so, while, leading up until January and for months, in advance it was very,
16 very easy to determine, you know, who belonged or who were self-proclaimed members
17 of QAnon by simply looking at people's bios, looking at their pictures, seeing what they
18 were saying, there was not an appetite to consider QAnon to be a harmful group, right?
19 They were considered to be this sort of loose conspiracy-theory network that, while being
20 an outsized superspreader of misinformation, was not contributing to any sort of real
21 offline harm.

22 And so QAnon was suspended under a policy called coordinated -- harassment?
23 Something. Apologies, don't remember the full -- it was called "CHA," but I don't
24 remember what "CHA" stands for.

25 Q Harmful?

1 A Coordinated harmful activities. Thank you so much. Coordinated harmful
2 activities.

3 So the coordinated harmful activities policy sat very close to the terrorist
4 organization and violent extremist group. So it was this sort of loosely organized
5 network of individuals that may not have the sort of membership, ideology, I'm going to
6 call it, like, theology, of these other groups but was adjacent towards that thing.

7 And so I think it was not until January 6th when we saw individuals on the Capitol
8 with Q flags, right? It was undeniable that there was a tie between, you know, this
9 loosely affiliated conspiracy-theory network and violence that had happened. And
10 because of that tie, I believe Twitter was finally willing to suspend the accounts.

1

2

BY MR. [REDACTED]

3

Q There was no political appetite or otherwise to do that before the 6th?

4

A There was none.

5

Q So we are reaching the end, so I wanted to keep plowing ahead if that's all

6

right.

7

I wanted to ask a few questions about President Trump's account and the unique treatment of President Trump's account, getting back to that point.

9

So can you give us a brief overview of the ways in which President Trump's account was treated differently than even the other sort of VIP accounts on Twitter?

10

11

A Yeah. Yeah. So I can give a little -- you might have to remind me of that

12

question again because there's a couple things coming into my head. So I have a

13

really -- I have a unique kind of view into the treatment of the former President's account

14

because when I joined Twitter, there was no knowledge base. There was no one

15

resource. There was no collection of information about how the account had been

16

historically treated or the assessments that had been made or why they were made.

17

And so, one of the projects that I worked on very early in my tenure was the

18

creation of what we called the DJT tracker, and it was a Google document, surprise, that

19

included a table within it. And the table would -- it had language of a tweet, the date

20

that it was tweeted, whether it was considered to be a violation or not a violation, and an

21

assessment of why and kind of the determination, so whether public interest interstitial

22

was applied, nothing was applied.

23

So in order to kind of populate this document, it was my job to research all of the

24

historical ways that this account had been treated. Again, very highly unsophisticated

25

process. I will say one of the other unique treatments of Donald Trump's account was

1 that we were not given access to his account within Profile Viewer two. So his account
2 was literally the only account on all of Twitter.com that our team was unable to access
3 within Profile Viewer. So we were not able to see what was called the guano notes. So
4 we were not able to see historical actions that had taken place.

5 So in order to populate this document, I literally had to go into our gmail email
6 alias, use the search function, search for key terms like Donald Trump or
7 @realdonaldtrump, and find within our emails, searched within them, to understand and
8 see the various assessments that had occurred.

9 Q No other world leader was given this level of deference on the platform,
10 correct?

11 A No. There was absolutely no other world leader. And I can talk a little bit
12 about the treatment of Donald Trump versus other world leaders, too.

13 Q And you said last time that Donald Trump was the only account that Jack
14 Dorsey needed to sign off on any disciplinary action; that's correct, right?

15 A Yes. That is absolutely true.

16 Q And you mentioned last time that you thought part of this was because
17 Donald Trump was the most prominent user on Twitter.

18 I'm wondering if you have any other thoughts on that dynamic?

19 A Yeah. I mean, I'll talk a little bit about specific examples coming out of, you
20 know, that research that I was talking about. I remember seeing ways in which the
21 account was treated differently. So, for instance, there was a time in which Joe
22 Scarborough and Mika, Morning Joe and Mika, I believe -- Donald Trump had called
23 Morning Joe a psycho on the platform. And I remember the assessment that was given
24 from the team was essentially saying if this was any other user on the platform, we would
25 attempt to reach out to them and do some sort of education with them to help them

1 understand why this sort of language was not okay.

2 But there was this underlying understanding we're not reaching out to the
3 President. We're not reaching out to Donald Trump. There is no point in doing
4 education here because this is how this individual is. Another example, I can think of is
5 when Donald Trump was tweeting about Kim Jong-Un. At one point, I believe he
6 referred to him as Little Rocket Man, and had some sort of discussion in which there was
7 a threat of essentially nuclear war happening. And I remember the assessment on that
8 specific instance being and saying, we cannot confirm that in the future, we would come
9 to this resolution. So the resolution was to do nothing, right?

10 It was, this is the public interest, we're going to leave it up. The assessment also
11 said, in the future this would be the type of tweet that we might use the public interest
12 interstitial for. So there was this -- even within the assessments and the analysis of
13 Donald Trump's tweets starting from -- I think I started researching this in 2017 when he
14 became President, there was this already underlying understanding that his account was
15 different, that there was -- that these options that would have been available, or the way
16 that we would have treated other VIPs, even world leaders, was not going to be the case
17 when it came to Donald Trump.

18 Q And if Donald Trump had been any other user, any other world leader, do
19 you believe he would have been able to remain on the platform throughout 2020 and
20 into 2021?

21 A There's absolutely no way. I can give you a couple of examples. So there
22 are other world leaders who have been treated completely differently on Twitter. One
23 of the main examples that comes to mind is President Bolsonaro in Brazil. There was a
24 time in which he tweeted misinformation. And as we know, Donald Trump tweeted a
25 lot of misinformation, and the response from Twitter to Donald Trump tweeting this

1 information was to label the tweets, right?

2 In this specific instance with President Bolsonaro, he was required to delete the
3 tweets, and I remember coming into the office and saying -- by coming into the office, I
4 mean logging onto Slack inside of my computer -- this is not okay, right? If we have
5 made the determination and decision that we're going to use interstitials, that we are
6 going to use labels on world leaders, whatever we do for Donald Trump we also have to
7 provide that same sort of enforcement, even enforcement, to world leaders around the
8 world.

9 Same thing happened with President Maduro in Venezuela. He was also
10 required to delete tweets that I believe were misinformation. Same thing with
11 President Buhari in Nigeria, was required to delete tweets. In his case, it was hateful
12 conduct. And so, we talked about what it took in order to have Donald Trump's tweets
13 labeled as hateful conduct, to use the public interest interstitial, we literally had to have a
14 historic tie to violence. And yet, we have president of another country who is tweeting
15 hateful conduct, and rather than apply the public interest interstitial, Twitter decided to
16 force him to delete the tweets. And so, there was absolutely a disparate treatment
17 between world leaders and Donald Trump.

18 Q And you'd been warning Twitter about his violations of hateful conduct
19 policy as far back as mid-2019 with the tweets about The Squad, correct?

20 A Yes.

21 Q And there had been a reticence to discuss any of those more dramatic
22 actions for a year subsequent?

23 A Absolutely. Yes.

24 Q And then another half a year until you got to January 6th where there was,
25 all the sudden, for the first time ever, a discussion of permanent suspension?

1 A Yes.

2 Q So I have one more question before we get to some final closing questions,
3 probably about ten more minutes.

4 The last question that I had before we get to overall views, is about the recent SEC
5 whistleblower that came forward to warn about the inadequacy of Twitter's investigative
6 capacities to look at extremist threats and the engineering resources --

7 A Yes.

8 Q -- that the safety teams are given.

9 So given the fact that you were on one of these teams --

10 A Yeah.

11 Q -- a senior member of one of these teams, I wanted to ask your thoughts on
12 this whistleblower --

13 Ms. Ronickher. Can we go off the record?

14 [REDACTED] Sure. We can go off the record at 6:34.

15 [Discussion off the record.]

16 [REDACTED] So we can move from that question.

17 The Witness. My reaction to news coverage of the thing?

18 [REDACTED] We can move on.

19 [REDACTED] Let me ask a different question.

20 Earlier we talked about how you really didn't get any resources to do any of the
21 content moderation that you were doing beyond what the average American has access
22 to.

23 Why do you think Twitter resisted investing in those kinds of resources?

24 The Witness. Yeah. I think that the trust and safety team, as a general rule,
25 was seen as a cost center for Twitter. We did not make Twitter money. We cost

1 Twitter money. And so, I think that the company was reluctant to give resources to a
2 team that really they saw as doing nothing for them, right? I think there's also the
3 reality that we were not a sexy team, right? We were not creating hot new products
4 that were gonna make new users. But the reality of our jobs was very often the
5 opposite, right? We were working on very old things that were not -- again, not sexy,
6 not unique, that needed patching, right, needed to be start from the beginning or needed
7 some additional tooling, or needed some sort of engineering support. And I believe
8 there just wasn't an investment. There wasn't a desire to invest in our capabilities, our
9 technologies, because it wasn't seen as important.

10 [REDACTED] Got it. And thank you.

11 And I do want to clarify just for the record because I realize it might look weird
12 when somebody looks back at the transcript, we asked you question about an SEC
13 whistleblower, we moved on from that, but can you confirm for the record that that is
14 not you?

15 The Witness. Oh, that is definitely not me.

16 [REDACTED] Great. So I didn't want that to be an issue on the record. Go
17 ahead, [REDACTED]

18 [REDACTED] Thank you, [REDACTED] So I think at this point, unless anyone has any
19 other questions, I wanted to move on to some final thoughts and concluding questions.

20 BY [REDACTED]:

21 Q So to start off, given our conversation here today, can you, again, briefly
22 summarize what you feel is Twitter's responsibility for the violence on January 6th?

23 A Yeah. I think I mentioned this a little bit earlier, but I think that we -- you
24 cannot examine what happened on January 6th within the United States without also
25 examining this symbiotic, if not parasitic relationship, between Donald Trump and

1 Twitter. I firmly believe that it is clear that January 6th was the result of incitement to
2 violence that happened based upon the rhetoric from Donald Trump and his supporters.

3 And I believe that Twitter bears the responsibility for being the main platform and
4 service through which Donald Trump's rhetoric and incitement to violence was not only
5 posted, but was amplified in ways that stoked flames and created a megaphone like we
6 have never seen before within communications history.

7 I believe that January 6th was planned, orchestrated, and carried out on the
8 Twitter platform within and right in front of our eyes using plain language and hashtags.
9 And Twitter, in my eyes, bears the responsibility for hosting and promoting incitement to
10 violence that led to the loss of life on January 6th.

11 Q So there is one question I had about Twitter's ongoing responses to this kind
12 of behavior. You mentioned at the very beginning of this session that you had a
13 conversation with Del Harvey in March 2021 before you left Twitter about the status of
14 the coded incitement policy.

15 What was that conversation like? What was the outcome?

16 A The conversation was not good. So the guidance that I issued on
17 January 6th was time-bound, and so it only lasted for a number of weeks. Come March,
18 I went to Del Harvey to discuss whether or not we should continue to implement the
19 coded incitement to violence policy and enforce underneath it. The conversation, I
20 guess, was classic Del and what we've been saying, in that her response was she was not
21 inclined to have the enforcement guidance continue to be in effect.

22 The reasoning that she gave was -- she said she would be more inclined to leave it
23 into effect if -- if what we saw or -- something -- I'm trying to remember exactly what she
24 said. But she essentially said she would be concerned if what we saw were militia
25 groups or individuals along those lines taking up arms and participating in sort of

1 organized large scale mass violence. And the response from myself and another
2 member of the team to her was that's ludicrous, right? And I remember specifically
3 saying Del, that's not what we saw happen literally like a month or two ago, right?

4 What we saw happen was not these terrorist organizations. It was not these
5 violent extremist groups. It was lone wolfs. It was individuals who felt harmed and/or
6 aggrieved. It was random Twitter user here and random Twitter user there who were
7 saying they were locked and loaded. So for me, I found her analysis to be ahistorical.
8 And I became concerned when she decided that the guidance should stop being enacted
9 and implemented, because it was the one stopgap that Twitter had in place in order to
10 prevent something like January 6th from happening again. And by removing it, I firmly
11 believed, and still do believe, that January 6th will not only occur again, but it will occur at
12 a grander scale.

13 Q So to your knowledge, there is no coded incitement policy active on Twitter
14 right now?

15 A Not to my knowledge.

16 Q And to summarize what you said, that ignores the call-and-response dynamic
17 that you saw play out between President Trump and his supporters for months, if not
18 years?

19 A Yes.

20 Q And just a few weeks ago, we saw President Trump criticize an FBI raid on his
21 property at Mar-a-Lago, and there are users on Twitter, such as Steven Crowder and
22 Marjorie Taylor Greene, who are making tweets that are on the platform referencing civil
23 war.

24 So given that, do you think Twitter has learned its lesson about the potential for
25 call-and-response to lead to real-world harm as we've already seen with attacks on the

1 FBI in Ohio?

2 A Twitter has not learned its lesson. I believe that the only repercussion, or
3 the only -- the only thing that really came out of January 6th to possibly halt anything
4 from occurring again was Donald Trump's account being permanently suspended. That
5 is the only thing that has carried on.

6 I do not believe that Twitter has ever accurately, or even -- not even accurately.
7 Twitter has never inspected its role within January 6th. It has never faced the music or
8 faced the sunlight to be able to say this is our responsibility for what we did.

9 To my knowledge, the team -- my team never even held a retrospect to talk about
10 the permanent suspension of Donald Trump. These things occurred, and then it was as
11 if they never happened. And that sort of approach does not allow for you to learn from
12 your mistakes. It does not allow for you to change. It does not allow for you to even
13 repeat the good work that could possibly have happened.

14 And so, I think that Twitter is in a precarious situation because of its place within
15 the social media ecosystem. But I also believe that this is a problem that extends far
16 beyond Twitter, because of the reality that Twitter's role and responsibility and the
17 realization that a social media company and platform was part of the impetus for the
18 incitement of violence and an attempted insurrection within the United States, not having
19 that be just fact does not allow for other companies to reckon with the ways in which
20 political speech or political violence that is currently happening on their platform can and
21 will grow, and what the outcome of that will be.

22 For me, having worked in it and having seen it, it's inevitable. To individuals who
23 have not had that same experience, who have not had the same reflection, who have not
24 had to say there is blood on the hands of this company and these individuals, they are
25 able to continue in this ahistoric approach without that sort of introspection, without the

1 need to have any sort of intervention that I very much believe will lead us to a place of
2 January 6th happening again.

3 Q So I guess I'll ask, are you concerned about the situation like January 6th
4 happening again, and are you concerned that social media companies haven't learned
5 their lesson to help prevent that from happening?

6 A Very much so. I will -- as an individual who has worked inside of companies
7 and continue to raise objections very similar and see fact patterns extremely similar to
8 January 6th continuing to play out within companies, I have watched my warnings go
9 unheeded again. I have heard responses. I have been told that I have a problem
10 hypothesizing issues, rather than companies and platforms recognizing that they are not
11 special. And that the problems that have plagued Facebook from day one that have also
12 come to Twitter are going to inevitably -- and they are already at the doorstep of these
13 companies that exist within every single space.

14 And that these companies are not only not prepared to deal with what would
15 have happened on January 6th, but they are not prepared to deal with the larger
16 attempted overthrow of the government that I believe to happen. It is absolutely my
17 fear that come 2024, we will not see a peaceful transition of power. We did not see a
18 peaceful transition of power in 2020. It is my fear that we have seen the last peaceful
19 transition of power at the presidential level within the United States of America.

20 I believe that the way social media companies have allowed the big lie and this
21 idea of a stolen election to permeate within their ranks and allowing, again, political
22 violence, political conversations to continue without any sort of restraint is the exact
23 same situation and fodder that happened leading up to January 6th. And so my fear is
24 that come January -- November 2024, there is no such thing as truth that exists anymore.
25 It cannot be found, and we will have another call for the violent overthrow of the

1 government that will succeed, and will -- will end up being the large-scale civil war that
2 individuals have been calling for and are openly calling for on the Twitter platform.

3 Q So last question to kind of sum all that up: You were the most senior safety
4 policy employee at Twitter during the 2020 election and January 6th. What scares you
5 the most about the social media landscape we're seeing today and the threat of violent
6 extremism moving into an election season this year and an election season in 2024?

7 A What scares me the most is how unprepared we are. Twitter, as I think I
8 mentioned earlier today, like, we didn't stand a chance, right? And we saw this coming,
9 and we tried very, very hard. And Twitter is one of the oldest and most legacy
10 companies that are doing this. That says nothing of smaller companies who have teams
11 that are less staffed, that are less resourced, that don't even have the basics of policies in
12 place to begin to create the guardrails and safeguards that we need to be in place in
13 order to prevent a violent overthrow of the government.

14 Q Thank you.

15 [REDACTED] Well, I appreciate all of that, and that's everything I had. But I don't
16 know if anyone else had any questions?

17 [REDACTED] Yeah. I had two questions that I'm hoping -- I'm mindful of the
18 clock, but I do thank you for the time that you spent with us today.

19 BY [REDACTED]

20 Q One of the clarifying questions, you said earlier that on January 6th, one of
21 the directives you got was to stop the insurrection.

22 I'm just curious, were those the words that they used, or do you recall what
23 particularly you were expected to do?

24 A It was my recollection that those were the words that were being used.

25 Q Okay. So they came to you and said stop the insurrection?

1 A Yes.

2 Q So you just spoke eloquently about what you felt the lesson was from
3 Twitter and January 6th, and what you felt their role was. And you also spoke about
4 they haven't actually done sort of postmortem themselves.

5 But what does it say to you about their knowledge about their role that they came
6 to you and said stop the insurrection?

7 A Yeah. It's clear to me that the truth is known, but people don't want to
8 know the truth and/or acknowledge the truth, right? It is very much -- Del Harvey
9 wouldn't have responded the way that she responded if she didn't agree that she had
10 blood on her hands, or that she could have blood on her hands. So I think it is a -- it
11 feels as if it's a secret, and it is something that Twitter wants to sweep under the rug and
12 never talk about again because of -- because of how close to home it is, and how big of a
13 deal it is.

14 Q You think they know?

15 A I firmly believe they know.

16 Q Thank you.

17 [REDACTED] That's all I have, N [REDACTED]

18 [REDACTED] Thank you, [REDACTED]

19 And with that -- unless you have anything else?

20 Ms. Ronickher. No.

21 [REDACTED] Great. Well, we can let the deposition stand in recess, subject to the
22 call of the Chair and go off the record at 6:53 p.m.

23 [Whereupon, at 6:53 p.m., the interview was recessed, subject to the call of the
24 chair.]

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Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

Witness Name

Date